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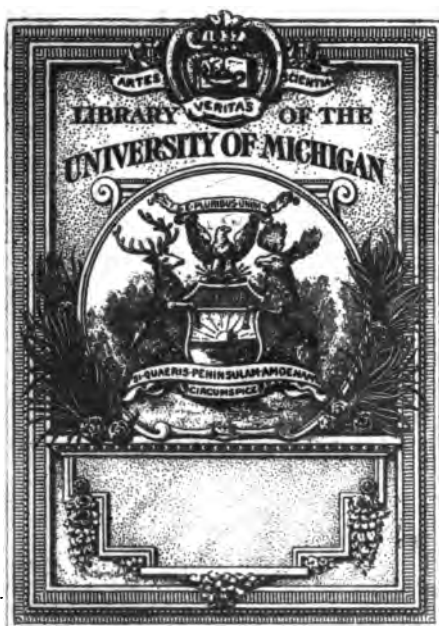
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COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS
TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 3258.

ST. IVES. BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

ST. IVES

BEING

THE ADVENTURES OF A FRENCH PRISONER
IN ENGLAND

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

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IN TWO VOLUMES. — VOL. II.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1898.

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S T. I V E S.

CHAPTER I

I BECOME THE OWNER OF A CLARET-COLOURED CHAISE.

WHAT with packing, signing papers, and partaking of an excellent cold supper in the lawyer's room, it was past two in the morning before we were ready for the road. Romaine himself let us out of a window in a part of the house known to Rowley: it appears it served as a kind of postern to the servants' hall, by which (when they were in the mind for a clandestine evening) they would come regularly in and out; and I remember very well the vinegar aspect of the lawyer on the receipt of this piece of information—how he pursed his lips, juttred his eyebrows, and kept repeating, "This must be seen to, indeed! this shall be barred to-morrow in the morning!" In this preoccupation, I believe he took leave of me without observing it; our things were handed out; we heard the window shut behind us; and became instantly lost in a horrid intricacy of blackness and the shadow of woods.

A little wet snow kept sleepily falling, pausing, and falling again; it seemed perpetually beginning to snow and perpetually leaving off; and the darkness was intense. Time and again we walked into trees; time and again found ourselves adrift among garden borders or stuck like a ram in the thicket. Rowley had possessed himself of the matches, and he was neither to be terrified nor softened. "No, I will not, Mr. Anne, sir," he would reply. "You know he tell me to wait till we were over the 'ill. It's only a little way now. Why, and I thought you was a soldier, too!" I was at least a very glad soldier when my valet consented at last to kindle a thieves' match. From this, we easily lit the lantern; and thenceforward, through a labyrinth of woodland paths, were conducted by its uneasy glimmer. Both booted and great-coated, with tall hats much of a shape, and laden with booty in the form of a despatch-box, a case of pistols, and two plump valises, I thought we had very much the look of a pair of brothers returning from the sack of Amersham Place.

We issued at last upon a country by-road where we might walk abreast and without precaution. It was nine miles to Aylesbury, our immediate destination; by a watch, which formed part of my new outfit, it should be about half-past three in the morning; and as we did not choose to arrive before daylight, time could not be said to press. I gave the order to march at ease.

"Now, Rowley," said I, "so far so good. You have

come, in the most obliging manner in the world, to carry these valises. The question is, what next? What are we to do at Aylesbury? or, more particularly, what are you? Thence, I go on a journey. Are you to accompany me?"

He gave a little chuckle. "That's all settled already, Mr. Anne, sir," he replied. "Why, I've got my things here in the valise—a half a dozen shirts and what not; I'm all ready, sir: just you lead on; *you'll* see."

"The devil you have!" said I. "You made pretty sure of your welcome."

"If you please, sir," said Rowley.

He looked up at me, in the light of the lantern, with a boyish shyness and triumph that awoke my conscience. I could never let this innocent involve himself in the perils and difficulties that beset my course, without some hint of warning, which it was a matter of extreme delicacy to make plain enough and not too plain.

"No, no," said I; "you may think you have made a choice, but it was blindfold, and you must make it over again. The Count's service is a good one; what are you leaving it for? Are you not throwing away the substance for the shadow? No, do not answer me yet. You imagine that I am a prosperous nobleman, just declared my uncle's heir, on the threshold of the best of good fortune, and, from the point of view of a judicious servant, a jewel of a master to serve and

stick to? Well, my boy, I am nothing of the kind, nothing of the kind."

As I said the words, I came to a full stop and held up the lantern to his face. He stood before me, brilliantly illuminated on the background of impenetrable night and falling snow, stricken to stone between his double burden like an ass between two panniers, and gaping at me like a blunderbuss. I had never seen a face so predestined to be astonished, or so susceptible of rendering the emotion of surprise; and it tempted me as an open piano tempts the musician.

"Nothing of the sort, Rowley," I continued, in a churchyard voice. "These are appearances, petty appearances. I am in peril, homeless, hunted. I count scarce anyone in England who is not my enemy. From this hour I drop my name, my title; I become nameless; my name is proscribed. My liberty, my life, hang by a hair. The destiny which you will accept, if you go forth with me, is to be tracked by spies, to hide yourself under a false name, to follow the desperate pretences and perhaps share the fate of a murderer with a price upon his head."

His face had been hitherto beyond expectation, passing from one depth to another of tragic astonishment, and really worth paying to see; but at this it suddenly cleared. "Oh, I ain't afraid!" he said; and then, choking into laughter, "why, I see it from the first!"

I could have beaten him. But I had so grossly overshot the mark that I suppose it took me two good

miles of road and half an hour of elocution to persuade him I had been in earnest. In the course of which I became so interested in demonstrating my present danger that I forgot all about my future safety, and not only told him the story of Goguelat, but threw in the business of the drovers as well, and ended by blurting out that I was a soldier of Napoleon's and a prisoner of war.

This was far from my views when I began; and it is a common complaint of me that I have a long tongue. I believe it is a fault beloved by fortune. Which of you considerate fellows would have done a thing at once so foolhardy and so wise as to make a confidant of a boy in his teens, and positively smelling of the nursery? And when had I cause to repent it? There is none so apt as a boy to be the adviser of any man in difficulties such as mine. To the beginnings of virile common sense he adds the last lights of the child's imagination; and he can fling himself into business with that superior earnestness that properly belongs to play. And Rowley was a boy made to my hand. He had a high sense of romance, and a secret cultus for all soldiers and criminals. His travelling library consisted of a chap-book life of Wallace and some sixpenny parts of the "Old Bailey Sessions Papers" by Gurney the shorthand writer; and the choice depicts his character to a hair. You can imagine how his new prospects brightened on a boy of this disposition. To be the servant and companion of a fugitive, a soldier, and a murderer,

rolled in one—to live by stratagems, disguises, and false names, in an atmosphere of midnight and mystery so thick that you could cut it with a knife—was really, I believe, more dear to him than his meals, though he was a great trencherman, and something of a glutton besides. For myself, as the peg by which all this romantic business hung, I was simply idolised from that moment; and he would rather have sacrificed his hand than surrendered the privilege of serving me.

We arranged the terms of our campaign, trudging amicably in the snow, which now, with the approach of morning, began to fall to purpose. I chose the name of Ramornie, I imagine from its likeness to Romaine; Rowley, from an irresistible conversion of ideas, I dubbed Gammon. His distress was laughable to witness: his own choice of an unassuming nickname had been Claude Duval! We settled our procedure at the various inns where we should alight, rehearsed our little manners like a piece of drill until it seemed impossible we should ever be taken unprepared; and in all these dispositions, you may be sure the despatch-box was not forgotten. Who was to pick it up, who was to set it down, who was to remain beside it, who was to sleep with it—there was no contingency omitted, all was gone into with the thoroughness of a drill-sergeant on the one hand and a child with a new plaything on the other.

“I say, wouldn’t it look queer if you and me was to come to the post-house with all this luggage?” said Rowley.

"I daresay," I replied. "But what else is to be done?"

"Well, now, sir—you hear me," says Rowley. "I think it would look more natural-like if you was to come to the post-house alone, and with nothing in your 'ands—more like a gentleman, you know. And you might say that your servant and baggage was a-waiting for you up the road. I think I could manage, somehow, to make a shift with all them dratted things—leastways if you was to give me a 'and up with them at the start."

"And I would see you far enough before I allowed you to try, Mr. Rowley!" I cried. "Why, you would be quite defenceless! A footpad that was an infant child could rob you. And I should probably come driving by to find you in a ditch with your throat cut. But there is something in your idea, for all that; and I propose we put it in execution no farther forward than the next corner of a lane."

Accordingly, instead of continuing to aim for Aylesbury, we headed by cross-roads for some point to the northward of it, whither I might assist Rowley with the baggage, and where I might leave him to await my return in the post-chaise.

It was snowing to purpose, the country all white, and ourselves walking snowdrifts, when the first glimmer of the morning showed us an inn upon the highwayside. Some distance off, under the shelter of a corner of the road and a clump of trees, I loaded Rowley with the whole of our possessions, and watched him till he

staggered in safety into the doors of the *Green Dragon*, which was the sign of the house. Thence I walked briskly into Aylesbury, rejoicing in my freedom and the causeless good spirits that belong to a snowy morning; though, to be sure, long before I had arrived the snow had again ceased to fall, and the eaves of Aylesbury were smoking in the level sun. There was an accumulation of gigs and chaises in the yard, and a great bustle going forward in the coffee-room and about the doors of the inn. At these evidences of so much travel on the road I was seized with a misgiving lest it should be impossible to get horses, and I should be detained in the precarious neighbourhood of my cousin. Hungry as I was, I made my way first of all to the postmaster, where he stood—a big, athletic, horsey-looking man, blowing into a key in the corner of the yard.

On my making my modest request, he awoke from his indifference into what seemed passion.

“A po’-shay and ’osses!” he cried. “Do I look as if I ’ad a po’-shay and ’osses? Damn me, if I ’ave such a thing on the premises. I don’t *make* ’osses and chaises—I ’ire ’em. You might be God Almighty!” said he; and instantly, as if he had observed me for the first time, he broke off, and lowered his voice into the confidential. “Why, now that I see you are a gentleman,” said he, “I’ll tell you what! If you like to *buy*, I have the article to fit you. Second-’and shay by Lycett, of London. Latest style; good as new. Superior fittin’s, net on the roof, baggage platform, pistol ’olsters

—the most complete and the most genteel turn-out I ever see! The 'ole for seventy-five pound! It's as good as givin' her away!"

"Do you propose I should trundle it myself, like a hawker's barrow?" said I. "Why, my good man, if I had to stop here, anyway, I should prefer to buy a house and garden!"

"Come and look at her!" he cried; and, with the word, links his arm in mine and carries me to the out-house where the chaise was on view.

It was just the sort of chaise that I had dreamed of for my purpose: eminently rich, inconspicuous, and genteel; for, though I thought the postmaster no great authority, I was bound to agree with him so far. The body was painted a dark claret, and the wheels an invisible green. The lamp and glasses were bright as silver; and the whole equipage had an air of privacy and reserve that seemed to repel inquiry and disarm suspicion. With a servant like Rowley, and a chaise like this, I felt that I could go from the Land's End to John o' Groat's House amid a population of bowing ostlers. And I suppose I betrayed in my manner the degree in which the bargain tempted me.

"Come," cried the postmaster—"I'll make it seventy, to oblige a friend!"

"The point is: the horses," said I.

"Well," said he, consulting his watch, "it's now gone the 'alf after eight. What time do you want her at the door?"

"Horses and all?" said I.

"Osses and all!" says he. "One good turn deserves another. You give me seventy pound for the shay, and I'll 'oss it for you. I told you I didn't *make* 'osses; but I *can* make 'em, to oblige a friend."

What would you have? It was not the wisest thing in the world to buy a chaise within a dozen miles of my uncle's house; but in this way I got my horses for the next stage. And by any other it appeared that I should have to wait. Accordingly I paid the money down—perhaps twenty pounds too much, though it was certainly a well-made and well-appointed vehicle—ordered it round in half an hour, and proceeded to refresh myself with breakfast.

The table to which I sat down occupied the recess of a bay-window, and commanded a view of the front of the inn, where I continued to be amused by the successive departures of travellers—the fussy and the offhand, the niggardly and the lavish—all exhibiting their different characters in that diagnostic moment of the farewell: some escorted to the stirrup or the chaise door by the chamberlain, the chambermaids and the waiters almost in a body, others moving off under a cloud, without human countenance. In the course of this I became interested in one for whom this ovation began to assume the proportions of a triumph; not only the under-servants, but the barmaid, the landlady, and my friend the postmaster himself, crowding about the steps to speed his departure. I was aware, at the same

time, of a good deal of merriment, as though the traveller were a man of a ready wit, and not too dignified to air it in that society. I leaned forward with a lively curiosity; and the next moment I had blotted myself behind the teapot. The popular traveller had turned to wave a farewell; and behold! he was no other than my cousin Alain. It was a change of the sharpest from the angry, pallid man I had seen at Amersham Place. Ruddy to a fault, illuminated with vintages, crowned with his curls like Bacchus, he now stood before me for an instant, the perfect master of himself, smiling with airs of conscious popularity and insufferable condescension. He reminded me at once of a royal duke, or an actor turned a little elderly, and of a blatant bagman who should have been the illegitimate son of a gentleman. A moment after he was gliding noiselessly on the road to London.

I breathed again. I recognised, with heartfelt gratitude, how lucky I had been to go in by the stable-yard instead of the hostelry door, and what a fine occasion of meeting my cousin I had lost by the purchase of the claret-coloured chaise! The next moment I remembered that there was a waiter present. No doubt but he must have observed me when I crouched behind the breakfast equipage; no doubt but he must have commented on this unusual and undignified behaviour; and it was essential that I should do something to remove the impression.

"Waiter!" said I, "that was the nephew of Count Carwell that just drove off, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir: Viscount Carwell we calls him," he replied.

"Ah, I thought as much," said I. "Well, well, damn all these Frenchmen, say I!"

"You may say so indeed, sir," said the waiter. "They ain't not to say in the same field with our 'ome-raised gentry."

"Nasty tempers?" I suggested.

"Beas'ly temper, sir, the Viscount 'ave," said the waiter with feeling. "Why, no longer agone than this morning, he was sitting breakfasting and reading in his paper. I suppose, sir, he come on some pilitical information, or it might be about 'orses, but he raps his 'and upon the table sudden and calls for *curaçao*. It gave me quite a turn, it did; he did it that sudden and 'ard. Now, sir, that may be manners in France, but hall I can say is, that I'm not used to it."

"Reading the paper, was he?" said I. "What paper, eh?"

"Here it is, sir," exclaimed the waiter. "Seems like as if he'd dropped it."

And picking it off the floor he presented it to me.

I may say that I was quite prepared, that I already knew what to expect; but at sight of the cold print my heart stopped beating. There it was: the fulfilment of Romaine's apprehension was before me; the paper was laid open at the capture of Clausel, I felt as if I could

take a little *curaçao* myself, but on second thoughts called for brandy. It was badly wanted; and suddenly I observed the waiter's eye to sparkle, as it were, with some recognition; made certain he had remarked the resemblance between me and Alain; and became aware—as by a revelation—of the fool's part I had been playing. For I had now managed to put my identification beyond a doubt, if Alain should choose to make his inquiries at Aylesbury; and, as if that were not enough, I had added, at an expense of seventy pounds, a clue by which he might follow me through the length and breadth of England, in the shape of the claret-coloured chaise! That elegant equipage (which I began to regard as little better than a claret-coloured ante-room to the hangman's cart) coming presently to the door, I left my breakfast in the middle and departed; posting to the north as diligently as my cousin Alain was posting to the south, and putting my trust (such as it was) in an opposite direction and equal speed.

CHAPTER II.

CHARACTER AND ACQUIREMENTS OF MR. ROWLEY.

I AM not certain that I had ever really appreciated before that hour the extreme peril of the adventure on which I was embarked. The sight of my cousin, the look of his face—so handsome, so jovial at the first sight, and branded with so much malignity as you saw it on the second—with his hyperbolical curls in order, with his neckcloth tied as if for the conquests of love, setting forth (as I had no doubt in the world he was doing) to clap the Bow Street runners on my trail, and cover England with handbills, each dangerous as a loaded musket, convinced me for the first time that the affair was no less serious than death. I believe it came to a near touch whether I should not turn the horses' heads at the next stage and make directly for the coast. But I was now in the position of a man who should have thrown his gage into the den of lions; or, better still, like one who should have quarrelled overnight under the influence of wine, and now, at daylight, in a cold winter's morning, and humbly sober, must make good his words. It is not that I thought any the less, or any the less warmly, of Flora. But, as I smoked

a grim sear that morning in a corner of the chaise, no doubt I considered, in the first place, that the letter-post had been invented, and admitted privately to myself, in the second, that it would have been highly possible to write her on a piece of paper, seal it, and send it skimming by the mail, instead of going personally into these egregious dangers, and through a country that I beheld crowded with gibbets and Bow Street officers. As for Sim and Candlish, I doubt if they crossed my mind.

At the Green Dragon Rowley was waiting on the doorsteps with the luggage, and really was bursting with unpalatable conversation.

"Who do you think we've 'ad 'ere, sir?" he began breathlessly, as the chaise drove off. "Red Breasts;" and he nodded his head portentously.

"Red Breasts?" I repeated, for I stupidly did not understand at the moment an expression I had often heard.

"Ah!" said he. "Red weskits. Runners. Bow Street runners. Two on 'em, and one was Lavender himself! I hear the other say quite plain, 'Now, Mr. Lavender, *if* you're ready.' They was breakfasting as nigh me as I am to that postboy. They're all right; they ain't after us. It's a forger; and I didn't send them off on a false scent—O no! I thought there was no use in having them over our way; so I give them 'very valuable information,' Mr. Lavender said, and tipped me a tizzy for myself; and they're off to Luton.

They showed me the 'andcuffs, too—the other one did—and he clicked the dratted things on my wrist; and I tell you, I believe I nearly went off in a swoond! There's something so beastly in the feel of them! Begging your pardon, Mr. Anne," he added, with one of his delicious changes from the character of the confidential schoolboy into that of the trained, respectful servant.

Well, I must not be proud! I cannot say I found the subject of handcuffs to my fancy; and it was with more asperity than was needful that I reproved him for the slip about the name.

"Yes, Mr. Ramornie," says he, touching his hat. "Begging your pardon, Mr. Ramornie. But I've been very piticular, sir, up to now; and you may trust me to be very piticular in the future. It were only a slip, sir."

"My good boy," said I, with the most imposing severity, "there must be no slips. Be so good as to remember that my life is at stake."

I did not embrace the occasion of telling him how many I had made myself. It is my principle that an officer must never be wrong. I have seen two divisions beating their brains out for a fortnight against a worthless and quite impregnable castle in a pass: I knew we were only doing it for discipline, because the General had said so at first, and had not yet found any way out of his own words; and I highly admired his force of character, and throughout these operations thought my life exposed in a very good cause. With fools and

children, which included Rowley, the necessity was even greater. I proposed to myself to be infallible; and even when he expressed some wonder at the purchase of the claret-coloured chaise, I put him promptly in his place. In our situation, I told him, everything had to be sacrificed to appearances; doubtless, in a hired chaise, we should have had more freedom, but look at the dignity! I was so positive, that I had sometimes almost convinced myself. Not for long, you may be certain! This detestable conveyance always appeared to me to be laden with Bow Street officers, and to have a placard upon the back of it publishing my name and crimes. If I had paid seventy pounds to get the thing, I should not have stuck at seven hundred to be safely rid of it.

And if the chaise was a danger, what an anxiety was the despatch-box and its golden cargo! I had never had a care but to draw my pay and spend it; I had lived happily in the regiment, as in my father's house, fed by the great Emperor's commissariat as by ubiquitous doves of Elijah—or, my faith! if anything went wrong with the commissariat, helping myself with the best grace in the world from the next peasant! And now I began to feel at the same time the burthen of riches and the fear of destitution. There were ten thousand pounds in the despatch-box, but I reckoned in French money, and had two hundred and fifty thousand agonies; I kept it under my hand all day, I dreamed of it at night. In the inns, I was afraid to go to dinner and afraid to go to sleep. When I walked

up a hill I durst not leave the doors of the claret-coloured chaise. Sometimes I would change the disposition of the funds: there were days when I carried as much as five or six thousand pounds on my own person, and only the residue continued to voyage in the treasure-chest—days when I bulked all over like my cousin, crackled to a touch with bank paper, and had my pockets weighed to bursting-point with sovereigns. And there were other days when I wearied of the thing—or grew ashamed of it—and put all the money back where it had come from: there let it take its chance, like better people! In short, I set Rowley a poor example of consistency, and in philosophy, none at all.

Little he cared! All was one to him so long as he was amused, and I never knew anyone amused more easily. He was thrillingly interested in life, travel, and his own melodramatic position. All day he would be looking from the chaise windows with ebullitions of gratified curiosity, that were sometimes justified and sometimes not, and that (taken altogether) it occasionally wearied me to be obliged to share. I can look at horses, and I can look at trees too, although not fond of it. But why should I look at a lame horse, or a tree that was like the letter Y? What exhilaration could I feel in viewing a cottage that was the same colour as "the second from the miller's" in some place where I had never been, and of which I had not previously heard? I am ashamed to complain, but there were moments when my juvenile and confidential friend

weighed heavy on my hands. His cackle was indeed almost continuous, but it was never unamiable. He showed an amiable curiosity when he was asking questions; an amiable guilelessness when he was conferring information. And both he did largely. I am in a position to write the biographies of Mr. Rowley, Mr. Rowley's father and mother, his Aunt Eliza, and the miller's dog; and nothing but pity for the reader, and some misgivings as to the law of copyright, prevail on me to withhold them.

A general design to mould himself upon my example became early apparent, and I had not the heart to check it. He began to mimic my carriage; he acquired, with servile accuracy, a little manner I had of shrugging the shoulders; and I may say it was by observing it in him that I first discovered it in myself. One day it came out by chance that I was of the Catholic religion. He became plunged in thought, at which I was gently glad. Then suddenly—

“Odd-rabbit it! I'll be Catholic too!” he broke out. “You must teach me it, Mr. Anne—I mean, Ramornie.”

I dissuaded him: alleging that he would find me very imperfectly informed as to the grounds and doctrines of the Church, and that, after all, in the matter of religions, it was a very poor idea to change. “Of course, my Church is the best,” said I; “but that is not the reason why I belong to it: I belong to it because it was the faith of my house. I wish to take

my chances with my own people, and so should you. If it is a question of going to hell, go to hell like a gentleman with your ancestors."

"Well, it wasn't that," he admitted. "I don't know that I was exactly thinking of hell. Then there's the inquisition, too. That's rather a cawker, you know."

"And I don't believe you were thinking of anything in the world," said I—which put a period to his respectable conversion.

He consoled himself by playing for awhile on a cheap flageolet, which was one of his diversions, and to which I owed many intervals of peace. When he first produced it, in the joints, from his pocket, he had the duplicity to ask me if I played upon it. I answered, no; and he put the instrument away with a sigh and the remark that he had thought I might. For some while he resisted the unspeakable temptation, his fingers visibly itching and twittering about his pocket, even his interest in the landscape and in sporadic anecdote entirely lost. Presently the pipe was in his hands again; he fitted, unfitted, refitted, and played upon it in dumb show for some time.

"I play it myself a little," says he.

"Do you?" said I, and yawned.

And then he broke down.

"Mr. Ramornie, if you please, would it disturb you, sir, if I was to play a chune?" he pleaded. And from that hour, the tootling of the flageolet cheered our way.

He was particularly keen on the details of battles,

single combats, incidents of scouting parties, and the like. These he would make haste to cap with some of the exploits of Wallace, the only hero with whom he had the least acquaintance. His enthusiasm was genuine and pretty. When he learned we were going to Scotland, "Well, then," he broke out, "I'll see where Wallace lived!" And presently after, he fell to moralising. "It's a strange thing, sir," he began, "that I seem somehow to have always the wrong sow by the ear. I'm English after all, and I glory in it. My eye! don't I, though! Let some of your Frenchies come over here to invade, and you'll see whether or not! Oh, yes, I'm English to the backbone, I am. And yet look at me! I got hold of this 'ere William Wallace and took to him right off; I never heard of such a man before! And then you came along, and I took to you. And both the two of you were my born enemies! I—I beg your pardon, Mr. Ramornie, but would you mind it very much if you didn't go for to do anything against England"—he brought the word out suddenly, like something hot—"when I was along of you?"

I was more affected than I can tell.

"Rowley," I said, "you need have no fear. By how much I love my own honour, by so much I will take care to protect yours. We are but fraternising at the outposts, as soldiers do. When the bugle calls, my boy, we must face each other, one for England, one for France, and may God defend the right!"

So I spoke at the moment; but for all my brave

airs, the boy had wounded me in a vital quarter. His words continued to ring in my hearing. There was no remission all day of my remorseful thoughts; and that night (which we lay at Lichfield, I believe) there was no sleep for me in my bed. I put out the candle and lay down with a good resolution; and in a moment all was light about me like a theatre, and I saw myself upon the stage of it playing ignoble parts. I remembered France and my Emperor, now depending on the arbitrament of war, bent down, fighting on their knees and with their teeth against so many and such various assailants. And I burned with shame to be here in England, cherishing an English fortune, pursuing an English mistress, and not there, to handle a musket in my native fields, and to manure them with my body if I fell. I remembered that I belonged to France. All my fathers had fought for her, and some had died; the voice in my throat, the sight of my eyes, the tears that now sprang there, the whole man of me, was fashioned of French earth and born of a French mother; I had been tended and caressed by a succession of the daughters of France, the fairest, the most ill-starred; and I had fought and conquered shoulder to shoulder with her sons. A soldier, a noble, of the proudest and bravest race in Europe, it had been left to the prattle of a hobbledehoy lackey in an English chaise to recall me to the consciousness of duty.

When I saw how it was I did not lose time in indecision. The old classical conflict of love and honour

being once fairly before me, it did not cost me a thought. I was a Saint-Yves de Kéroual; and I decided to strike off on the morrow for Wakefield and Burchell Fenn, and embark, as soon as it should be morally possible, for the succour of my downtrodden fatherland and my beleaguered Emperor. Pursuant on this resolve, I leaped from bed, made a light, and as the watchman was crying half-past two in the dark streets of Lichfield, sat down to pen a letter of farewell to Flora. And then—whether it was the sudden chill of the night, whether it came by association of ideas from the remembrance of Swanston Cottage I know not, but there appeared before me—to the barking of sheep-dogs—a couple of snuffy and shambling figures, each wrapped in a plaid, each armed with a rude staff; and I was immediately bowed down to have forgotten them so long, and of late to have thought of them so cavalierly.

Sure enough there was my errand! As a private person I was neither French nor English; I was something else first: a loyal gentleman, an honest man. Sim and Candlish must not be left to pay the penalty of my unfortunate blow. They held my honour tacitly pledged to succour them; and it is a sort of stoical refinement entirely foreign to my nature to set the political obligation above the personal and private. If France fell in the interval for the lack of Anne de St.-Yves, fall she must! But I was both surprised and humiliated to have had so plain a duty bound upon me for so long—and for so long to have neglected and forgotten it. I think any

brave man will understand me when I say that I went to bed and to sleep with a conscience very much relieved, and woke again in the morning with a light heart. The very danger of the enterprise reassured me: to save Sim and Candlish (suppose the worst to come to the worst) it would be necessary for me to declare myself in a court of justice, with consequences which I did not dare to dwell upon; it could never be said that I had chosen the cheap and the easy—only that in a very perplexing competition of duties I had risked my life for the most immediate.

We resumed the journey with more diligence: thenceforward posted day and night; did not halt beyond what was necessary for meals; and the postillions were excited by gratuities, after the habit of my cousin Alain. For twopence I could have gone farther and taken four horses; so extreme was my haste, running as I was before the terrors of an awakened conscience. But I feared to be conspicuous. Even as it was, we attracted only too much attention, with our pair and that white elephant, the seventy-pounds-worth of claret-coloured chaise.

Meanwhile I was ashamed to look Rowley in the face. The young shaver had contrived to put me wholly in the wrong; he had cost me a night's rest and a severe and healthful humiliation; and I was grateful and embarrassed in his society. This would never do; it was contrary to all my ideas of discipline; if the officer has to blush before the private, or the master

before the servant, nothing is left to hope for but discharge or death. I hit upon the idea of teaching him French; and accordingly, from Lichfield, I became the distracted master, and he the scholar—how shall I say? indefatigable, but uninspired. His interest never flagged. He would hear the same word twenty times with profound refreshment, mispronounce it in several different ways, and forget it again with magical celerity. Say it happened to be *stirrup*. “No, I don’t seem to remember that word, Mr. Anne,” he would say: “it don’t seem to stick to me, that word don’t.” And then, when I had told it him again, “*Etrier!*” he would cry. “To be sure! I had it on the tip of my tongue. *Eterier!*” (going wrong already, as if by a fatal instinct). “What will I remember it by, now? Why, *interior*, to be sure! I’ll remember it by its being something that ain’t in the interior of a horse.” And when next I had occasion to ask him the French for stirrup, it was a toss-up whether he had forgotten all about it, or gave me *exterior* for an answer. He was never a hair discouraged. He seemed to consider that he was covering the ground at a normal rate. He came up smiling day after day. “Now, sir, shall we do our French?” he would say; and I would put questions, and elicit copious commentary and explanation, but never the shadow of an answer. My hands fell to my sides; I could have wept to hear him. When I reflected that he had as yet learned nothing, and what a vast deal more there was for him to learn, the period of these

lessons seemed to unroll before me vast as eternity, and I saw myself a teacher of a hundred, and Rowley a pupil of ninety, still hammering on the rudiments! The wretched boy, I should say, was quite unspoiled by the inevitable familiarities of the journey. He turned out at each stage the pink of serving-lads, deft, civil, prompt, attentive, touching his hat like an automaton, raising the status of Mr. Ramornie in the eyes of all the inn by his smiling service, and seeming capable of anything in the world but the one thing I had chosen—learning French!

CHAPTER III.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE RUNAWAY COUPLE.

THE country had for some time back been changing in character. By a thousand indications I could judge that I was again drawing near to Scotland. I saw it written in the face of the hills, in the growth of the trees, and in the glint of the waterbrooks that kept the high-road company. It might have occurred to me, also, that I was, at the same time, approaching a place of some fame in Britain—Gretna Green. Over these same leagues of road—which Rowley and I now traversed in the claret-coloured chaise, to the note of the flageolet and the French lesson—how many pairs of lovers had gone bowling northwards to the music of sixteen scampering horseshoes; and how many irate persons, parents, uncles, guardians, evicted rivals, had come tearing after, clapping the frequent red face to the chaise-window, lavishly shedding their gold about the post-houses, sedulously loading and re-loading, as they went, their avenging pistols! But I doubt if I had thought of it at all, before a wayside hazard swept me into the thick of an adventure of this nature; and I found myself playing providence with other people's lives, to my own admiration

at the moment—and subsequently to my own brief but passionate regret.

At rather an ugly corner of an uphill reach I came on the wreck of a chaise lying on one side in the ditch, a man and a woman in animated discourse in the middle of the road, and the two postillions, each with his pair of horses, looking on and laughing from the saddle.

“Morning breezes! here’s a smash!” cried Rowley, pocketing his flageolet in the middle of the *Tight Little Island*.

I was perhaps more conscious of the moral smash than the physical—more alive to broken hearts than to broken chaises; for, as plain as the sun at morning, there was a screw loose in this runaway match. It is always a bad sign when the lower classes laugh: their taste in humour is both poor and sinister; and for a man, running the posts with four horses, presumably with open pockets, and in the company of the most entrancing little creature conceivable, to have come down so far as to be laughed at by his own postillions, was only to be explained on the double hypothesis, that he was a fool and no gentleman.

I have said they were man and woman. I should have said man and child. She was certainly not more than seventeen, pretty as an angel, just plump enough to damn a saint, and dressed in various shades of blue, from her stockings to her saucy cap, in a kind of taking gamut, the top note of which she flung me in a beam from her too appreciative eye. There was no doubt

about the case: I saw it all. From a boarding-school, a black-board, a piano, and Clementi's *Sonatinas*, the child had made a rash adventure upon life in the company of a half-bred hawbuck; and she was already not only regretting it, but expressing her regret with point and pungency.

As I lighted they both paused with that unmistakable air of being interrupted in a scene. I uncovered to the lady and placed my services at their disposal.

It was the man who answered. "There's no use in shamming, sir," said he. "This lady and I have run away, and her father's after us: road to Gretna, sir. And here have these nincompoops spilt us in the ditch and smashed the chaise!"

"Very provoking," said I.

"I don't know when I've been so provoked!" cried he, with a glance down the road, of mortal terror.

"The father is no doubt very much incensed?" I pursued civilly.

"O God!" cried the hawbuck. "In short, you see, we must get out of this. And I'll tell you what—it may seem cool, but necessity has no law—if you would lend us your chaise to the next post-house, it would be the very thing, sir."

"I confess it seems cool," I replied.

"What's that you say, sir?" he snapped.

"I was agreeing with you," said I. "Yes, it does seem cool; and what is more to the point, it seems unnecessary. This thing can be arranged in a more satis-

factory manner otherwise, I think. You can doubtless ride?"

This opened a door on the matter of their previous dispute, and the fellow appeared life-sized in his true colours. "That's what I've been telling her: that, damn her! she must ride!" he broke out. "And if the gentleman's of the same mind, why, damme, you shall!"

As he said so, he made a snatch at her wrist, which she evaded with horror.

I stepped between them.

"No, sir," said I; "the lady shall not."

He turned on me raging. "And who are you to interfere?" he roared.

"There is here no question of who I am," I replied. "I may be the devil or the Archbishop of Canterbury for what you know, or need know. The point is that I can help you—it appears that nobody else can; and I will tell you how I propose to do it. I will give the lady a seat in my chaise, if you will return the compliment by allowing my servant to ride one of your horses."

I thought he would have sprung at my throat.

"You have always the alternative before you: to wait here for the arrival of papa," I added.

And that settled him. He cast another haggard look down the road, and capitulated.

"I am sure, sir, the lady is very much obliged to you," he said, with an ill grace.

I gave her my hand; she mounted like a bird into

the chaise; Rowley, grinning from ear to ear, closed the door behind us; the two impudent rascals of post-boys cheered and laughed aloud as we drove off; and my own postillion urged his horses at once into a rattling trot. It was plain I was supposed by all to have done a very dashing act, and ravished the bride from the ravisher.

In the meantime I stole a look at the little lady. She was in a state of pitiable discomposure, and her arms shook on her lap in her black lace mittens.

"Madam——" I began.

And she, in the same moment, finding her voice: "O, what you must think of me!"

"Madam," said I, "what must any gentleman think when he sees youth, beauty and innocence in distress? I wish I could tell you that I was old enough to be your father; I think we must give that up," I continued, with a smile. "But I will tell you something about myself which ought to do as well, and to set that little heart at rest in my society. I am a lover. May I say it of myself—for I am not quite used to all the niceties of English—that I am a true lover? There is one whom I admire, adore, obey; she is no less good than she is beautiful; if she were here, she would take you to her arms: conceive that she has sent me—that she has said to me, 'Go, be her knight!'"

"O, I know she must be sweet, I know she must be worthy of you!" cried the little lady. "She would never

forget female decorum—nor make the terrible *erratum* I've done!"

And at this she lifted up her voice and wept.

This did not forward matters: it was in vain that I begged her to be more composed and to tell me a plain, consecutive tale of her misadventures; but she continued instead to pour forth the most extraordinary mixture of the correct school miss and the poor untutored little piece of womanhood in a false position—of engrafted pedantry and incoherent nature.

"I am certain it must have been judicial blindness," she sobbed. "I can't think how I didn't see it, but I didn't; and he isn't, is he? And then a curtain rose . . . O, what a moment was that! But I knew at once that *you were*; you had but to appear from your carriage, and I knew it. O, she must be a fortunate young lady! And I have no fear with you, none—a perfect confidence."

"Madam," said I, "a gentleman."

"That's what I mean—a gentleman," she exclaimed. "And he—and that—*he* isn't. O, how shall I dare meet father!" And disclosing to me her tear-stained face, and opening her arms with a tragic gesture: "And I am quite disgraced before all the young ladies, my school-companions!" she added.

"O, not so bad as that!" I cried. "Come, come, you exaggerate, my dear Miss ——? Excuse me if I am too familiar: I have not yet heard your name."

"My name is Dorothy Greensleeves, sir: why should

I conceal it? I fear it will only serve to point an adage to future generations, and I had meant so differently! There was no young female in the county more emulous to be thought well of than I. And what a fall was there! O, dear me, what a wicked, piggish donkey of a girl I have made of myself, to be sure! And there is no hope! O, Mr. ——”

And at that she paused and asked my name.

I am not writing my eulogium for the Academy; I will admit it was unpardonably imbecile, but I told it her. If you had been there—and seen her, ravishingly pretty and little, a baby in years and mind—and heard her talking like a book, with so much of schoolroom propriety in her manner, with such an innocent despair in the matter—you would probably have told her yours. She repeated it after me.

“I shall pray for you all my life,” she said. “Every night, when I retire to rest, the last thing I shall do is to remember you by name.”

Presently I succeeded in winning from her her tale, which was much what I had anticipated: a tale of a schoolhouse, a walled garden, a fruit-tree that concealed a bench, an impudent raff posturing in church, an exchange of flowers and vows over the garden wall, a silly schoolmate for a confidante, a chaise and four, and the most immediate and perfect disenchantment on the part of the little lady. “And there is nothing to be done!” she wailed in conclusion. “My error is irretrievable, I am quite forced to that conclusion. O, Monsieur

de Saint-Yves! who would have thought that I could have been such a blind, wicked donkey!"

I should have said before—only that I really do not know when it came in—that we had been overtaken by the two post-boys, Rowley and Mr. Bellamy, which was the hawbuck's name, bestriding the four post-horses; and that these formed a sort of cavalry escort, riding now before, now behind the chaise, and Bellamy occasionally posturing at the window and obliging us with some of his conversation. He was so ill-received that I declare I was tempted to pity him, remembering from what a height he had fallen, and how few hours ago it was since the lady had herself fled to his arms, all blushes and ardour. Well, these great strokes of fortune usually befall the unworthy, and Bellamy was now the legitimate object of my commiseration and the ridicule of his own post-boys!

"Miss Dorothy," said I, "you wish to be delivered from this man?"

"O, if it were possible!" she cried. "But not by violence."

"Not in the least, ma'am," I replied. "The simplest thing in life. We are in a civilised country; the man's a malefactor——"

"O, never!" she cried. "Do not even dream it! With all his faults, I know he is not *that*."

"Anyway, he's in the wrong in this affair—on the wrong side of the law, call it what you please," said I; and with that, our four horsemen having for the mo-

ment headed us by a considerable interval, I hailed my post-boy and inquired who was the nearest magistrate and where he lived. Archdeacon Clitheroe, he told me, a prodigious dignitary, and one who lived but a lane or two back, and at the distance of only a mile or two out of the direct road. I showed him the king's medallion.

"Take the lady there, and at full gallop," I cried.

"Right; sir! Mind yourself," says the postillion.

And before I could have thought it possible, he had turned the carriage to the rightabout and we were galloping south.

Our outriders were quick to remark and imitate the manœuvre, and came flying after us with a vast deal of indiscriminate shouting; so that the fine, sober picture of a carriage and escort, that we had presented but a moment back, was transformed in the twinkling of an eye into the image of a noisy fox-chase. The two postillions and my own saucy rogue were, of course, disinterested actors in the comedy; they rode for the mere sport, keeping in a body, their mouths full of laughter, waving their hats as they came on, and crying (as the fancy struck them) "Tally-ho!" "Stop, thief!" "A highwayman! A highwayman!" It was otherguess work with Bellamy. That gentleman no sooner observed our change of direction than he turned his horse with so much violence that the poor animal was almost cast upon its side, and launched her in immediate and desperate pursuit. As he approached I saw that his face

was deadly white and that he carried a drawn pistol in his hand. I turned at once to the poor little bride that was to have been, and now was not to be; she, upon her side, deserting the other window, turned as if to meet me.

"O, O, don't let him kill me!" she screamed.

"Never fear," I replied.

Her face was distorted with terror. Her hands took hold upon me with the instinctive clutch of an infant. The chaise gave a flying lurch, which took the feet from under me and tumbled us anyhow upon the seat. And almost in the same moment the head of Bellamy appeared in the window which Missy had left free for him.

Conceive the situation! The little lady and I were falling—or had just fallen—backward on the seat, and offered to the eye a somewhat ambiguous picture. The chaise was speeding at a furious pace, and with the most violent leaps and lurches, along the highway. Into this bounding receptacle Bellamy interjected his head, his pistol arm, and his pistol; and since his own horse was travelling still faster than the chaise, he must withdraw all of them again in the inside of the fraction of a minute. He did so, but he left the charge of the pistol behind him—whether by design or accident I shall never know, and I dare say he has forgotten! Probably he had only meant to threaten, in hopes of causing us to arrest our flight. In the same moment came the explosion and a pitiful cry from Missy; and

my gentleman, making certain he had struck her, went down the road pursued by the furies, turned at the first corner, took a flying leap over the thorn hedge, and disappeared across country in the least possible time.

Rowley was ready and eager to pursue; but I withheld him, thinking we were excellently quit of Mr. Bellamy, at no more cost than a scratch on the forearm and a bullet-hole in the left-hand claret-coloured panel. And accordingly, but now at a more decent pace, we proceeded on our way to Archdeacon Clitheroe's. Missy's gratitude and admiration were aroused to a high pitch by this dramatic scene, and what she was pleased to call my wound. She must dress it for me with her handkerchief, a service which she rendered me even with tears. I could well have spared them, not loving on the whole to be made ridiculous, and the injury being in the nature of a cat's scratch. Indeed, I would have suggested for her kind care rather the cure of my coat-sleeve, which had suffered worse in the encounter; but I was too wise to risk the anti-climax. That she had been rescued by a hero, that the hero should have been wounded in the affray, and his wound bandaged with her handkerchief (which it could not even bloody), ministered incredibly to the recovery of her self-respect; and I could hear her relate the incident to "the young ladies, my school-companions," in the most approved manner of Mrs. Radcliffe! To have insisted on the torn coat-sleeve would have been unmannerly, if not inhuman.

Presently the residence of the archdeacon began to heave in sight. A chaise and four smoking horses stood by the steps, and made way for us on our approach; and even as we alighted there appeared from the interior of the house a tall ecclesiastic, and beside him a little, headstrong, ruddy man, in a towering passion, and brandishing over his head a roll of paper. At sight of him Miss Dorothy flung herself on her knees with the most moving adjurations, calling him father, assuring him she was wholly cured and entirely repentant of her disobedience, and entreating forgiveness; and I soon saw that she need fear no great severity from Mr. Greensleeves, who showed himself extraordinarily fond, loud, greedy of caresses and prodigal of tears.

To give myself a countenance, as well as to have all ready for the road when I should find occasion, I turned to quit scores with Bellamy's two postillions. They had not the least claim on me, but one of which they were quite ignorant—that I was a fugitive. It is the worst feature of that false position that every gratuity becomes a case of conscience. You must not leave behind you anyone discontented nor anyone grateful. But the whole business had been such a "hurrah-boys" from the beginning, and had gone off in the fifth act so like a melodrama, in explosions, reconciliations, and the rape of a post-horse, that it was plainly impossible to keep it covered. It was plain it would have to be talked over in all the inn-kitchens for thirty miles about,

and likely for six months to come. It only remained for me, therefore, to settle on that gratuity which should be least conspicuous—so large that nobody could grumble, so small that nobody would be tempted to boast. My decision was hastily and not wisely taken. The one fellow spat on his tip (so he called it) for luck; the other developing a sudden streak of piety, prayed God bless me with fervour. It seemed a demonstration was brewing, and I determined to be off at once. Bidding my own post-boy and Rowley be in readiness for an immediate start, I reascended the terrace and presented myself, hat in hand, before Mr. Greensleeves and the archdeacon.

"You will excuse me, I trust," said I. "I think shame to interrupt this agreeable scene of family effusion, which I have been privileged in some small degree to bring about."

And at these words the storm broke.

"Small degree! small degree, sir!" cries the father; "that shall not pass, Mr. St. Eaves! If I've got my darling back, and none the worse for that vagabone rascal, I know whom I have to thank. Shake hands with me—up to the elbows, sir! A Frenchman you may be, but you're one of the right breed, by God! And, by God, sir, you may have anything you care to ask of me, down to Dolly's hand, by God!"

All this he roared out in a voice surprisingly powerful from so small a person. Every word was thus audible to the servants, who had followed them out of

the house and now congregated about us on the terrace, as well as to Rowley and the five postillions on the gravel sweep below. The sentiments expressed were popular; some ass, whom the devil moved to be my enemy, proposed three cheers, and they were given with a will. To hear my own name resounding amid acclamations in the hills of Westmorland was flattering, perhaps; but it was inconvenient at a moment when (as I was morally persuaded) police handbills were already speeding after me at the rate of a hundred miles a day.

Nor was that the end of it. The archdeacon must present his compliments, and pressed upon me some of his West India sherry, and I was carried into a vastly fine library, where I was presented to his lady wife. While we were at sherry in the library, ale was handed round upon the terrace. Speeches were made, hands were shaken, Missy (at her father's request) kissed me farewell, and the whole party reaccompanied me to the terrace, where they stood waving hats and handkerchiefs, and crying farewells to all the echoes of the mountains until the chaise had disappeared.

The echoes of the mountains were engaged in saying to me privately: "You fool, you have done it now!"

"They do seem to have got 'old of your name, Mr. Anne," said Rowley. "It weren't my fault this time."

"It was one of those accidents that can never be foreseen," said I, affecting a dignity that I was far from feeling. "Someone recognised me."

"Which on 'em, Mr. Anne?" said the rascal.

"That is a senseless question; it can make no difference who it was," I returned.

"No, nor that it can't!" cried Rowley. "I say, Mr. Anne, sir, it's what you would call a jolly mess, ain't it? looks like 'clean bowled-out in the middle stump,' don't it?"

"I fail to understand you, Rowley."

"Well, what I mean is, what are we to do about this one?" pointing to the postillion in front of us, as he alternately hid and revealed his patched breeches to the trot of his horse. "He see you get in this morning under Mr. Ramornie—I was very piticular to *Mr. Ramornie* you, if you remember, sir—and he see you get in again under Mr. Saint Eaves, and whatever's he going to see you get out under? that's what worries me, sir. It don't seem to me like as if the position was what you call *stratetegic!*"

"*Parrrbleu!* will you let me be!" I cried. "I have to think; you cannot imagine how your constant idiotic prattle annoys me."

"Beg pardon, Mr. Anne," said he; and the next moment, "You wouldn't like for us to do our French now, would you, Mr. Anne?"

"Certainly not," said I. "Play upon your flageolet."

The which he did with what seemed to me to be irony.

Conscience doth make cowards of us all! I was so downcast by my pitiful mismanagement of the morning's

business that I shrank from the eye of my own hired infant, and read offensive meanings into his idle tootling.

I took off my coat, and set to mending it, soldier-fashion, with a needle and thread. There is nothing more conducive to thought, above all in arduous circumstances; and as I sewed, I gradually gained a clearness upon my affairs. I must be done with the claret-coloured chaise at once. It should be sold at the next stage for what it would bring. Rowley and I must take back to the road on our four feet, and after a decent interval of trudging, get places on some coach for Edinburgh again under new names! So much trouble and toil, so much extra risk and expense and loss of time, and all for a slip of the tongue to a little lady in blue!

CHAPTER IV.

THE INN-KEEPER OF KIRKBY-LONSDALE.

I HAD hitherto conceived and partly carried out an ideal that was dear to my heart. Rowley and I descended from our claret-coloured chaise, a couple of correctly dressed, brisk, bright-eyed young fellows, like a pair of aristocratic mice; attending singly to our own affairs, communicating solely with each other, and that with the niceties and civilities of drill. We would pass through the little crowd before the door with high-bred preoccupation, inoffensively haughty, after the best English pattern; and disappear within, followed by the envy and admiration of the bystanders, a model master and servant, point-device in every part. It was a heavy thought to me, as we drew up before the inn at Kirkby-Lonsdale, that this scene was now to be enacted for the last time. Alas! and had I known it, it was to go off with so inferior a grace!

I had been injudiciously liberal to the post-boys of the chaise and four. My own post-boy, he of the patched breeches, now stood before me, his eyes glittering with greed, his hand advanced. It was plain he anticipated something extraordinary by way of a *pour-*

boire; and considering the marches and counter-marches by which I had extended the stage, the military character of our affairs with Mr. Bellamy, and the bad example I had set before him at the archdeacon's, something exceptional was certainly to be done. But these are always nice questions, to a foreigner above all: a shade too little will suggest niggardliness, a shilling too much smells of hush-money. Fresh from the scene at the archdeacon's, and flushed by the idea that I was now nearly done with the responsibilities of the claret-coloured chaise, I put into his hands five guineas; and the amount served only to waken his cupidity.

"O, come, sir, you ain't going to fob me off with this? Why, I seen fire at your side!" he cried.

It would never do to give him more; I felt I should become the fable of Kirkby-Lonsdale if I did; and I looked him in the face, sternly but still smiling, and addressed him with a voice of uncompromising firmness.

"If you do not like it, give it back," said I.

He pocketed the guineas with the quickness of a conjurer, and, like a base-born cockney as he was, fell instantly to casting dirt.

"Ave your own way of it, Mr. Ramornie—leastways Mr. St. Eaves, or whatever your blessed name may be. Look 'ere"—turning for sympathy to the stable-boys—"this is a blessed business. Blessed 'ard, I calls it. 'Ere I takes up a blessed son of a pop-gun what calls hisself anything you care to mention, and turns out to

be a blessed *mounseer* at the end of it! 'Ere 'ave I been drivin' of him up and down all day, a-carrying off of gals, a-shootin' of pistyils, and a-drinkin' of sherry and hale; and wot does he up and give me but a blank, blank, blanketing blank!"

The fellow's language had become too powerful for reproduction, and I passed it by.

Meanwhile I observed Rowley fretting visibly at the bit; another moment, and he would have added a last touch of the ridiculous to our arrival by coming to his hands with the postillion.

"Rowley!" cried I reprovngly.

Strictly it should have been Gammon; but in the hurry of the moment, my fault (I can only hope) passed unperceived. At the same time I caught the eye of the postmaster. He was long and lean, and brown and bilious; he had the drooping nose of the humourist, and the quick attention of a man of parts. He read my embarrassment in a glance, stepped instantly forward, sent the post-boy to the rightabout with half a word, and was back next moment at my side.

"Dinner in a private room, sir? Very well. John, No. 4! What wine would you care to mention? Very well, sir. Will you please to order fresh horses? Not, sir? Very well."

Each of these expressions was accompanied by something in the nature of a bow, and all were prefaced by something in the nature of a smile, which I could very well have done without. The man's politeness was

from the teeth outwards; behind and within, I was conscious of a perpetual scrutiny: the scene at his doorstep, the random confidences of the post-boy, had not been thrown away on this observer; and it was under a strong fear of coming trouble that I was shown at last into my private room. I was in half a mind to have put off the whole business. But the truth is, now my name had got abroad, my fear of the mail that was coming, and the handbills it should contain, had waxed inordinately, and I felt I could never eat a meal in peace till I had severed my connection with the claret-coloured chaise.

Accordingly, as soon as I had done with dinner, I sent my compliments to the landlord and requested he should take a glass of wine with me. He came; we exchanged the necessary civilities, and presently I approached my business.

"By-the-bye," said I, "we had a brush down the road to-day. I dare say you may have heard of it?"

He nodded.

"And I was so unlucky as to get a pistol ball in the panel of my chaise," I continued, "which makes it simply useless to me. Do you know anyone likely to buy?"

"I can well understand that," said the landlord, "I was looking at it just now; it's as good as ruined, is that chaise. General rule, people don't like chaises with bullet-holes."

"Too much *Romance of the Forest?*" I suggested

recalling my little friend of the morning, and what I was sure had been her favourite reading—Mrs. Radcliffe's novels.

"Just so," said he. "They may be right, they may be wrong; I'm not the judge. But I suppose it's natural, after all, for respectable people to like things respectable about them; not bullet-holes, nor puddles of blood, nor men with aliases."

I took a glass of wine and held it up to the light to show that my hand was steady.

"Yes," said I, "I suppose so."

"You have papers, of course, showing you are the proper owner?" he inquired.

"There is the bill, stamped and receipted," said I, tossing it across to him.

He looked at it.

"This all you have?" he asked.

"It is enough, at least," said I. "It shows you where I bought and what I paid for it."

"Well, I don't know," he said. "You want some paper of identification."

"To identify the chaise?" I inquired.

"Not at all: to identify *you*," said he.

"My good sir, remember yourself!" said I. "The title-deeds of my estate are in that despatch-box; but you do not seriously suppose that I should allow you to examine them?"

"Well, you see, this paper proves that some Mr. Ramornie paid seventy guineas for a chaise," said the

fellow. "That's all well and good; but who's to prove to me that you are Mr. Ramornie?"

"Fellow!" cried I.

"O, fellow as much as you please!" said he. "Fellow, with all my heart! That changes nothing. I am fellow, of course—obtrusive fellow, impudent fellow, if you like—but who are you? I hear of you with two names; I hear of you running away with young ladies, and getting cheered for a Frenchman, which seems odd; and one thing I will go bail for, that you were in a blue fright when the post-boy began to tell tales at my door. In short, sir, you may be a very good gentleman; but I don't know enough about you, and I'll trouble you for your papers, or to go before a magistrate. Take your choice; if I'm not fine enough, I hope the magistrates are."

"My good man," I stammered, for though I had found my voice, I could scarce be said to have recovered my wits, "this is most unusual, most rude. Is it the custom in Westmoreland that gentlemen should be insulted?"

"That depends," said he. "When it's suspected that gentlemen are spies it *is* the custom; and a good custom, too. No, no," he broke out, perceiving me to make a movement. "Both hands upon the table, my gentleman! I want no pistol balls in my chaise panels."

"Surely, sir, you do me strange injustice!" said I, now the master of myself. "You see me sitting here, a

monument of tranquillity: pray may I help myself to wine without umbraging you?"

I took this attitude in sheer despair. I had no plan, no hope. The best I could imagine was to spin the business out some minutes longer, then capitulate. At least, I would not capitulate one moment too soon.

"Am I to take that for *no*?" he asked.

"Referring to your former obliging proposal?" said I. "My good sir, you are to take it, as you say, for 'No.' Certainly I will not show you my deeds; certainly I will not rise from table and trundle out to see your magistrates. I have too much respect for my digestion, and too little curiosity in justices of the peace."

He leaned forward, looked me nearly in the face, and reached out one hand to the bell-rope. "See here, my fine fellow!" said he. "Do you see that bell-rope? Let me tell you, there's a boy waiting below: one jingle, and he goes to fetch the constable."

"Do you tell me so?" said I. "Well, there's no accounting for tastes! I have a prejudice against the society of constables, but if it is your fancy to have one in for the dessert——" I shrugged my shoulders lightly. "Really, you know," I added, "this is vastly entertaining. I assure you, I am looking on, with all the interest of a man of the world, at the development of your highly original character."

He continued to study my face without speech, his

hand still on the button of the bell-rope, his eyes in mine; this was the decisive heat. My face seemed to myself to dislimn under his gaze, my expression to change, the smile (with which I had begun) to degenerate into the grin of the man upon the rack. I was besides harassed with doubts. An innocent man, I argued, would have resented the fellow's impudence an hour ago; and by my continued endurance of the ordeal, I was simply signing and sealing my confession; in short, I had reached the end of my powers.

"Have you any objection to my putting my hands in my breeches pockets?" I inquired. "Excuse me mentioning it, but you showed yourself so extremely nervous a moment back."

My voice was not all I could have wished, but it sufficed. I could hear it tremble, but the landlord apparently could not. He turned away and drew a long breath, and you may be sure I was quick to follow his example.

"You're a cool hand at least, and that's the sort I like," said he. "Be you what you please, I'll deal square. I'll take the chaise for a hundred pound down, and throw the dinner in."

"I beg your pardon," I cried, wholly mystified by this form of words.

"You pay me a hundred down," he repeated, "and I'll take the chaise. It's very little more than it cost," he added, with a grin, "and you know you must get it off your hands somehow."

I do not know when I have been better entertained than by this impudent proposal. It was broadly funny, and I suppose the least tempting offer in the world. For all that, it came very welcome, for it gave me the occasion to laugh. This I did with the most complete abandonment, till the tears ran down my cheeks; and ever and again, as the fit abated, I would get another view of the landlord's face, and go off into another paroxysm.

"You droll creature, you will be the death of me yet!" I cried, drying my eyes.

My friend was now wholly disconcerted; he knew not where to look, nor yet what to say; and began for the first time to conceive it possible he was mistaken.

"You seem rather to enjoy a laugh, sir," said he.

"O, yes! I am quite an original," I replied, and laughed again.

Presently, in a changed voice, he offered me twenty pounds for the chaise; I ran him up to twenty-five, and closed with the offer: indeed, I was glad to get anything; and if I haggled, it was not in the desire of gain, but with the view at any price of securing a safe retreat. For, although hostilities were suspended, he was yet far from satisfied; and I could read his continued suspicions in the cloudy eye that still hovered about my face. At last they took shape in words.

"This is all very well," says he: "you carry it off well; but for all that, I must do my duty."

I had my strong effect in reserve; it was to burn my ships with a vengeance! I rose. "Leave the room," said L. "This is insufferable. Is the man mad?" And then, as if already half-ashamed of my passion: "I can take a joke as well as anyone," I added; "but this passes measure. Send my servant and the bill."

When he had left me alone, I considered my own valour with amazement. I had insulted him; I had sent him away alone; now, if ever, he would take what was the only sensible resource, and fetch the constable. But there was something instinctively treacherous about the man which shrank from plain courses. And, with all his cleverness, he missed the occasion of fame. Rowley and I were suffered to walk out of his door, with all our baggage, on foot, with no destination named, except in the vague statement that we were come "to view the lakes;" and my friend only watched our departure with his chin in his hand, still moodily irresolute.

I think this one of my great successes. I was exposed, unmasked, summoned to do a perfectly natural act, which must prove my doom and which I had not the slightest pretext for refusing. I kept my head, stuck to my guns, and, against all likelihood, here I was once more at liberty and in the king's highway. This was a strong lesson never to despair; and, at the same time, how many hints to be cautious! and what a perplexed and dubious business the whole question of my escape now appeared! That I should have risked perishing upon a trumpery question of a *pourboire*, depicted in

lively colours the perils that perpetually surrounded us. Though, to be sure, the initial mistake had been committed before that; and if I had not suffered myself to be drawn a little deep in confidences to the innocent Dolly, there need have been no tumble at the inn of Kirkby-Lonsdale. I took the lesson to heart, and promised myself in the future to be more reserved. It was none of my business to attend to broken chaises or shipwrecked travellers. I had my hands full of my own affairs; and my best defence would be a little more natural selfishness and a trifle less imbecile good-nature.

CHAPTER V.

I MEET A CHEERFUL EXTRAVAGANT.

I PASS over the next fifty or sixty leagues of our journey without comment. The reader must be growing weary of scenes of travel; and for my own part I have no cause to recall these particular miles with any pleasure. We were mainly occupied with attempts to obliterate our trail, which (as the result showed) were far from successful; for, on my cousin following, he was able to run me home with the least possible loss of time, following the claret-coloured chaise to Kirkby-Lonsdale, where I think the landlord must have wept to learn what he had missed, and tracing us thereafter to the doors of the coach-office in Edinburgh without a single check. Fortune did not favour me, and why should I recapitulate the details of futile precautions which deceived nobody, and wearisome arts which proved to be artless?

The day was drawing to an end when Mr. Rowley and I bowled into Edinburgh to the stirring sound of the guard's bugle and the clattering team. I was here upon my field of battle; on the scene of my former captivity, escape and exploits; and in the same city with

my love. My heart expanded; I have rarely felt more of a hero. All down the Bridges I sat by the driver with my arms folded and my face set, unflinchingly meeting every eye, and prepared every moment for a cry of recognition. Hundreds of the population were in the habit of visiting the Castle, where it was my practice (before the days of Flora) to make myself conspicuous among the prisoners; and I think it an extraordinary thing that I should have encountered so few to recognise me. But doubtless a clean chin is a disguise in itself; and the change is great from a suit of sulphur-yellow to fine linen, a well-fitting mouse-coloured great-coat furred in black, a pair of tight trousers of fashionable cut, and a hat of inimitable curl. After all, it was more likely that I should have recognised our visitors, than that they should have identified the modish gentleman with the miserable prisoner in the Castle.

I was glad to set foot on the flagstones, and to escape from the crowd that had assembled to receive the mail. Here we were, with but little daylight before us, and that on Saturday afternoon, the eve of the famous Scottish Sabbath, adrift in the New Town of Edinburgh, and overladen with baggage. We carried it ourselves. I would not take a cab, nor so much as hire a porter, who might afterwards serve as a link between my lodgings and the mail, and connect me again with the claret-coloured chaise and Aylesbury. For I was resolved to break the chain of evidence for good, and to begin life afresh (so far as regards caution) with a

new character. The first step was to find lodgings, and to find them quickly. This was the more needful as Mr. Rowley and I, in our smart clothes and with our cumbrous burthen, made a noticeable appearance in the streets at that time of the day and in that quarter of the town, which was largely given up to fine folk, bucks and dandies and young ladies, or respectable professional men on their way home to dinner.

On the north side of St. James' Square I was so happy as to spy a bill in a third-floor window. I was equally indifferent to cost and convenience in my choice of a lodging—"any port in a storm" was the principle on which I was prepared to act; and Rowley and I made at once for the common entrance and scaled the stair.

We were admitted by a very sour-looking female in bombazine. I gathered she had all her life been depressed by a series of bereavements, the last of which might very well have befallen her the day before; and I instinctively lowered my voice when I addressed her. She admitted she had rooms to let—even showed them to us—a sitting-room and bedroom in a *suite*, commanding a fine prospect to the Firth and Fifeshire, and in themselves well proportioned and comfortably furnished, with pictures on the wall, shells on the mantelpiece, and several books upon the table which I found afterwards to be all of a devotional character, and all presentation copies, "to my Christian friend," or "to my devout acquaintance in the Lord, Bethiah McRankine." Beyond

this my "Christian friend" could not be made to advance: no, not even to do that which seemed the most natural and pleasing thing in the world—I mean to name her price—but stood before us shaking her head, and at times mourning like the dove, the picture of depression and defence. She had a voice the most querulous I have ever heard, and with this she produced a whole regiment of difficulties and criticisms.

She could not promise an attendance.

"Well, madam," said I, "and what is my servant for?"

"Him?" she asked. "Be gude to us! Is *he* your servant?"

"I am sorry, ma'am, he meets with your disapproval."

"Na, I never said that. But he's young. He'll be a great breaker, I'm thinkin'. Ay! he'll be a great responsibleity to ye, like. Does he attend to his re-leegion?"

"Yes, m'm," returned Rowley, with admirable promptitude, and, immediately closing his eyes, as if from habit, repeated the following distich with more celerity than fervour:—

"Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
Bless the bed that I lie on!"

"Nhm!" said the lady, and maintained an awful silence.

"Well, ma'am," said I, "it seems we are never to

hear the beginning of your terms, let alone the end of them. Come—a good movement! and let us be either off or on.”

She opened her lips slowly. “Ony raferences?” she inquired, in a voice like a bell.

I opened my pocket-book and showed her a handful of bank bills. “I think, madam, that these are unexceptionable,” said I.

“Ye’ll be wantin’ breakfast late?” was her reply.

“Madam, we want breakfast at whatever hour it suits you to give it, from four in the morning till four in the afternoon!” I cried. “Only tell us your figure, if your mouth be large enough to let it out!”

“I couldnae give ye supper the nicht,” came the echo.

“We shall go out to supper, you incorrigible female!” I vowed, between laughter and tears. “Here—this is going to end! I want you for a landlady—let me tell you that!—and I am going to have my way. You won’t tell me what you charge? Very well; I will do without! I can trust you! You don’t seem to know when you have a good lodger; but I know perfectly when I have an honest landlady! Rowley, unstrap the valises!”

Will it be credited? The monomaniac fell to rating me for my indiscretion! But the battle was over; these were her last guns, and more in the nature of a salute than of renewed hostilities. And presently she condescended on very moderate terms, and Rowley and I were able to escape in quest of supper. Much time

had, however, been lost; the sun was long down, the lamps glimmered along the streets, and the voice of a watchman already resounded in the neighbouring Leith Road. On our first arrival I had observed a place of entertainment not far off, in a street behind the Register House. Thither we found our way, and sat down to a late dinner alone. But we had scarce given our orders before the door opened, and a tall young fellow entered with something of a lurch, looked about him, and approached the same table.

"Give you good evening, most grave and reverend seniors!" said he. "Will you permit a wanderer, a pilgrim—the pilgrim of love, in short—to come to temporary anchor under your lee? I care not who knows it, but I have a passionate aversion from the bestial practice of solitary feeding!"

"You are welcome, sir," said I, "if I may take upon me so far to play the host in a public place."

He looked startled, and fixed a hazy eye on me, as he sat down.

"Sir," said he, "you are a man not without some tincture of letters, I perceive! What shall we drink, sir?"

I mentioned I had already called for a pot of porter.

"A modest pot—the seasonable quencher?" said he. "Well, I do not know but what I could look at a modest pot myself! I am, for the moment, in precarious health. Much study hath heated my brain, much walking wearied my—well, it seems to be more my eyes!"

"You have walked far, I dare say?" I suggested.

"Not so much far as often," he replied. "There is in this city—to which, I think, you are a stranger? Sir, to your very good health and our better acquaintance!—there is, in this city of Dunedin, a certain implication of streets which reflects the utmost credit on the designer and the publicans—at every hundred yards is seated the Judicious Tavern, so that persons of contemplative mind are secure, at moderate distances, of refreshment. I have been doing a trot in that favoured quarter, favoured by art and nature. A few chosen comrades—enemies of publicity and friends to wit and wine—obliged me with their society. 'Along the cool, sequestered vale of Register Street we kept the uneven tenor of our way,' sir."

"It struck me, as you came in——" I began.

"O, don't make any bones about it!" he interrupted. "Of course it struck you! and let me tell you I was devilish lucky not to strike myself. When I entered this apartment I shone 'with all the pomp and prodigality of brandy and water,' as the poet Gray has in another place expressed it. Powerful bard, Gray! but a niminy-piminy creature, afraid of a petticoat and a bottle—not a man, sir, not a man! Excuse me for being so troublesome, but what the devil have I done with my fork? Thank you, I am sure. *Temulentia, quoad me ipsum, brevis colligo est.* I sit and eat, sir, in a London fog. I should bring a link-boy to table with me; and I would too, if the little brutes were only washed! I intend to

found a Philanthropical Society for Washing the Deserving Poor and Shaving Soldiers. I am pleased to observe that, although not of an unmilitary bearing, you are apparently shaved. In my calendar of the virtues shaving comes next to drinking. A gentleman may be a low-minded ruffian without sixpence, but he will always be close shaved. See me, with the eye of fancy, in the chill hours of the morning, say about a quarter to twelve, noon—see me awake! First thing of all, without one thought of the plausible but unsatisfactory small beer, or the healthful though insipid soda-water, I take the deadly razor in my vacillating grasp; I proceed to skate upon the margin of eternity. Stimulating thought! I bleed, perhaps, but with medicable wounds. The stubble reaped, I pass out of my chamber, calm but triumphant. To employ a hackneyed phrase, I would not call Lord Wellington my uncle! I, too, have dared, perhaps bled, before the imminent deadly shaving-table."

In this manner the bombastic fellow continued to entertain me all through dinner, and by a common error of drunkards, because he had been extremely talkative himself, leaped to the conclusion that he had chanced on very genial company. He told me his name, his address; he begged we should meet again; finally he proposed that I should dine with him in the country at an early date.

"The dinner is official," he explained. "The office-bearers and Senatus of the University of Cramond—an

educational institution in which I have the honour to be Professor of Nonsense—meet to do honour to our friend Icarus, at the old-established *howff*, Cramond Bridge. One place is vacant, fascinating stranger,—I offer it to you!”

“And who is your friend Icarus?” I asked.

“The aspiring son of Dædalus!” said he. “Is it possible that you have never heard the name of Byfield?”

“Possible and true,” said I.

“And is fame so small a thing?” cried he. “Byfield, sir, is an aeronaut. He apes the fame of a Lunardi, and is on the point of offering to the inhabitants—I beg your pardon, to the nobility and gentry of our neighbourhood—the spectacle of an ascension. As one of the gentry concerned I may be permitted to remark that I am unmoved. I care not a Tinker’s Damn for his ascension. No more—I breathe it in your ear—does anybody else. The business is stale, sir, stale. Lunardi did it, and overdid it. A whimsical, fiddling, vain fellow, by all accounts—for I was at that time rocking in my cradle. But once was enough. If Lunardi went up and came down, there was the matter settled. We prefer to grant the point. We do not want to see the experiment repeated *ad nauseam* by Byfield, and Brown, and Butler, and Brodie, and Bottomley. Ah! if they would go up and *not* come down again! But this is by the question. The University of Cramond delights to honour merit in the man, sir, rather

than utility in the profession; and Byfield, though an ignorant dog, is a sound reliable drinker, and really not amiss over his cups. Under the radiance of the kindly jar partiality might even credit him with wit."

It will be seen afterwards that this was more my business than I thought it at the time. Indeed, I was impatient to be gone. Even as my friend maundered ahead a squall burst, the jaws of the rain were opened against the coffee-house windows, and at that inclement signal I remembered I was due elsewhere.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COTTAGE AT NIGHT.

AT the door I was nearly blown back by the unbridled violence of the squall, and Rowley and I must shout our parting words. All the way along Princes Street (whither my way led) the wind hunted me behind and screamed in my ears. The city was flushed with bucketfuls of rain that tasted salt from the neighbouring ocean. It seemed to darken and lighten again in the vicissitudes of the gusts. Now you would say the lamps had been blown out from end to end of the long thoroughfare; now, in a lull, they would revive, re-multiply, shine again on the wet pavements, and make darkness sparingly visible.

By the time I had got to the corner of the Lothian Road there was a distinct improvement. For one thing, I had now my shoulder to the wind; for a second, I came in the lee of my old prison-house, the Castle; and, at anyrate, the excessive fury of the blast was itself moderating. The thought of what errand I was on re-awoke within me, and I seemed to breast the rough weather with increasing ease. With such a destination, what mattered a little buffeting of wind or a sprinkle of

cold water? I recalled Flora's image, I took her in fancy to my arms, and my heart throbbed. And the next moment I had recognised the inanity of that fool's paradise. If I could spy her taper as she went to bed, I might count myself lucky.

I had about two leagues before me of a road mostly uphill, and now deep in mire. So soon as I was clear of the last street-lamp, darkness received me—a darkness only pointed by the lights of occasional rustic farms, where the dogs howled with uplifted heads as I went by. The wind continued to decline: it had been but a squall, not a tempest. The rain, on the other hand, settled into a steady deluge, which had soon drenched me thoroughly. I continued to tramp forward in the night, contending with gloomy thoughts and accompanied by the dismal ululation of the dogs. What ailed them that they should have been thus wakeful, and perceived the small sound of my steps amid the general reverberation of the rain, was more than I could fancy. I remembered tales with which I had been entertained in childhood. I told myself some murderer was going by, and the brutes perceived upon him the faint smell of blood; and the next moment, with a physical shock, I had applied the words to my own case!

Here was a dismal disposition for a lover. "Was ever lady in this humour wooed?" I asked myself, and came near turning back. It is never wise to risk a critical interview when your spirits are depressed, your clothes muddy, and your hands wet! But the boisterous

night was in itself favourable to my enterprise: now, or perhaps never, I might find some way to have an interview with Flora; and if I had one interview (wet clothes, low spirits and all), I told myself there would certainly be another.

Arrived in the cottage-garden I found the circumstances mighty inclement. From the round holes in the shutters of the parlour, shafts of candle-light streamed forth; elsewhere the darkness was complete. The trees, the thickets, were saturated; the lower parts of the garden turned into a morass. At intervals, when the wind broke forth again, there passed overhead a wild coil of clashing branches; and between whiles the whole enclosure continuously and stridently resounded with the rain. I advanced close to the window and contrived to read the face of my watch. It was half-past seven; they would not retire before ten, they might not before midnight, and the prospect was unpleasant. In a lull of the wind I could hear from the inside the voice of Flora reading aloud; the words of course inaudible—only a flow of undecipherable speech, quiet, cordial, colourless, more intimate and winning, more eloquent of her personality, but not less beautiful than song. And the next moment the clamour of a fresh squall broke out about the cottage; the voice was drowned in its bellowing, and I was glad to retreat from my dangerous post.

For three egregious hours I must now suffer the elements to do their worst upon me, and continue to

hold my ground in patience. I recalled the least fortunate of my services in the field: being out-sentry of the pickets in weather no less vile, sometimes unsuppered and with nothing to look forward to by way of breakfast but musket-balls; and they seemed light in comparison. So strangely are we built: so much more strong is the love of woman than the mere love of life.

At last my patience was rewarded. The light disappeared from the parlour and reappeared a moment after in the room above. I was pretty well informed for the enterprise that lay before me. I knew the lair of the dragon—that which was just illuminated. I knew the bower of my Rosamond, and how excellently it was placed on the ground-level, round the flank of the cottage and out of earshot of her formidable aunt. Nothing was left but to apply my knowledge. I was then at the bottom of the garden, whether I had gone (Heaven save the mark!) for warmth, that I might walk to and fro unheard and keep myself from perishing. The night had fallen still, the wind ceased; the noise of the rain had much lightened, if it had not stopped, and was succeeded by the dripping of the garden trees. In the midst of this lull, and as I was already drawing near to the cottage, I was startled by the sound of a window-sash screaming in its channels; and a step or two beyond I became aware of a gush of light upon the darkness. It fell from Flora's window, which she had flung open on the night, and where she now sat, roseate and pensive, in the shine of two candles falling from

behind, her tresses deeply embowering and shading her; the suspended comb still in one hand, the other idly clinging to the iron stanchions with which the window was barred.

Keeping to the turf, and favoured by the darkness of the night and the patter of the rain which was now returning, though without wind, I approached until I could almost have touched her. It seemed a grossness of which I was incapable to break up her reverie by speech. I stood and drank her in with my eyes; how the light made a glory in her hair, and (what I have always thought the most ravishing thing in nature) how the planes ran into each other, and were distinguished, and how the hues blended and varied, and were shaded off, between the cheek and neck. At first I was abashed: she wore her beauty like an immediate halo of refinement; she discouraged me like an angel, or what I suspect to be the next most discouraging, a modern lady. But as I continued to gaze, hope and life returned to me; I forgot my timidity, I forgot the sickening pack of wet clothes with which I stood burdened, I tingled with new blood.

Still unconscious of my presence, still gazing before her upon the illuminated image of the window, the straight shadows of the bars, the glinting of pebbles on the path, and the impenetrable night on the garden and the hills beyond it, she heaved a deep breath that struck upon my heart like an appeal.

"Why does Miss Gilchrist sigh?" I whispered. "Does she recall absent friends?"

She turned her head swiftly in my direction; it was the only sign of surprise she deigned to make. At the same time I stepped into the light and bowed profoundly.

"You!" she said. "Here?"

"Yes, I am here," I replied. "I have come very far, it may be a hundred and fifty leagues, to see you. I have waited all this night in your garden. Will Miss Gilchrist not offer her hand—to a friend in trouble?"

She extended it between the bars, and I dropped upon one knee on the wet path and kissed it twice. At the second it was withdrawn suddenly, methought with more of a start than she had hitherto displayed. I regained my former attitude, and we were both silent awhile. My timidity returned on me tenfold. I looked in her face for any signals of anger, and seeing her eyes to waver and fall aside from mine, augured that all was well.

"You must have been mad to come here!" she broke out. "Of all places under heaven this is no place for you to come. And I was just thinking you were safe in France!"

"You were thinking of me!" I cried.

"Mr. St. Ives, you cannot understand your danger," she replied. "I am sure of it, and yet I cannot find it in my heart to tell you. O, be persuaded, and go!"

"I believe I know the worst. But I was never one

to set an undue value on life, the life that we share with beasts. My university has been in the wars, not a famous place of education, but one where a man learns to carry his life in his hand as lightly as a glove, and for his lady or his honour to lay it as lightly down. You appeal to my fears, and you do wrong. I have come to Scotland with my eyes quite open to see you and to speak with you—it may be for the last time. With my eyes quite open, I say; and if I did not hesitate at the beginning do you think that I would draw back now?”

“You do not know!” she cried, with rising agitation. “This country, even this garden, is death to you. They all believe it; I am the only one that does not. If they hear you now, if they heard a whisper—I dread to think of it. O, go, go this instant. It is my prayer.”

“Dear lady, do not refuse me what I have come so far to seek; and remember that out of all the millions in England there is no other but yourself in whom I can dare confide. I have all the world against me; you are my only ally; and as I have to speak, you have to listen. All is true that they say of me, and all of it false at the same time. I did kill this man Goguelat—it was that you meant?”

She mutely signed to me that it was; she had become deadly pale.

“But I killed him in fair fight. Till then, I had never taken a life unless in battle, which is my trade. But I was grateful, I was on fire with gratitude, to one

who had been good to me, who had been better to me than I could have dreamed of an angel, who had come into the darkness of my prison like sunrise. The man Goguelat insulted her. O, he had insulted *me* often, it was his favourite pastime, and he might insult me as he pleased—for who was I? But with that lady it was different. I could never forgive myself if I had let it pass. And we fought, and he fell, and I have no remorse.”

I waited anxiously for some reply. The worst was now out, and I knew that she had heard of it before; but it was impossible for me to go on with my narrative without some shadow of encouragement.

“You blame me?”

“No, not at all. It is a point I cannot speak on—I am only a girl. I am sure you were in the right: I have always said so—to Ronald. Not, of course, to my aunt. I am afraid I let her speak as she will. You must not think me a disloyal friend; and even with the Major—I did not tell you he had become quite a friend of ours—Major Chevenix, I mean—he has taken such a fancy to Ronald! It was he that brought the news to us of that hateful Clausel being captured, and all that he was saying. I was indignant with him. I said—I daresay I said too much—and I must say he was very good-natured. He said, ‘You and I, who are his friends, *know* that Champdivers is innocent. But what is the use of saying it?’ All this was in the corner of the room, in what they call an aside. And then he said,

'Give me a chance to speak to you in private, I have much to tell you.' And he did. And told me just what you did—that it was an affair of honour, and no blame attached to you. O, I must say I like that Major Chevenix!"

At this I was seized with a great pang of jealousy. I remembered the first time that he had seen her, the interest that he seemed immediately to conceive; and I could not but admire the dog for the use he had been ingenious enough to make of our acquaintance in order to supplant me. All is fair in love and war. For all that, I was now no less anxious to do the speaking myself than I had been before to hear Flora. At least, I could keep clear of the hateful image of Major Chevenix. Accordingly I burst at once on the narrative of my adventures. It was the same as you have read, but briefer, and told with a very different purpose. Now every incident had a particular bearing, every by-way branched off to Rome—and that was Flora.

When I had begun to speak I had kneeled upon the gravel withoutside the low window, rested my arms upon the sill, and lowered my voice to the most confidential whisper. Flora herself must kneel upon the other side, and this brought our heads upon a level with only the bars between us. So placed, so separated, it seemed that our proximity, and the continuous and low sounds of my pleading voice, worked progressively and powerfully on her heart, and perhaps not less so on my own. For these spells are double-edged. The silly birds may

be charmed with the pipe of the fowler, which is but a tube of reeds. Not so with a bird of our own feather! As I went on, and my resolve strengthened, and my voice found new modulations, and our faces were drawn closer to the bars and to each other, not only she, but I, succumbed to the fascination, and were kindled by the charm. We make love, and thereby ourselves fall the deeper in it. It is with the heart only that one captures a heart.

"And now," I continued, "I will tell you what you can still do for me. I run a little risk just now, and you see for yourself how unavoidable it is for any man of honour. But if—but in case of the worst I do not choose to enrich either my enemies or the Prince Regent. I have here the bulk of what my uncle gave me. Eight thousand odd pounds. Will you take care of it for me? Do not think of it merely as money; take and keep it as a relic of your friend or some precious piece of him. I may have bitter need of it ere long. Do you know the old country story of the giant who gave his heart to his wife to keep for him, thinking it safer to repose on her loyalty than his own strength? Flora, I am the giant—a very little one: will you be the keeper of my life? It is my heart I offer you in this symbol. In the sight of God, if you will have it, I give you my name, I endow you with my money. If the worst come, if I may never hope to call you wife, let me at least think that you will use my uncle's legacy as my widow."

"No, not that," she said. "Never that."

"What then?" I said. "What else, my angel? What are words to me? There is but one name that I care to know you by. Flora, my love!"

"Anne!" she said.

What sound is so full of music as one's own name uttered for the first time in the voice of her we love!

"My darling!" said I.

The jealous bars, set at the top and bottom in stone and lime, obstructed the rapture of the moment; but I took her to myself as wholly as they allowed. She did not shun my lips. My arms were wound round her body, which yielded itself generously to my embrace. As we so remained, entwined and yet severed, bruising our faces unconsciously on the cold bars, the irony of the universe—or as I prefer to say, envy of some of the gods—again stirred up the elements of that stormy night. The wind blew again in the tree-tops; a volley of cold sea-rain deluged the garden, and, as the deuce would have it, a gutter which had been hitherto choked up began suddenly to play upon my head and shoulders with the vivacity of a fountain. We parted with a shock; I sprang to my feet, and she to hers, as though we had been discovered. A moment after, but now both standing, we had again approached the window on either side.

"Flora," I said, "this is but a poor offer I can make you."

She took my hand in hers and clasped it to her bosom.

"Rich enough for a queen!" she said, with a lift in her breathing that was more eloquent than words. "Anne, my brave Anne! I would be glad to be your maidservant; I could envy that boy Rowley. But, no!" she broke off, "I envy no one—I need not—I am yours."

"Mine," said I, "for ever! By this and this, mine!"

"All of me," she repeated. "Altogether, and for ever!"

And if the god were envious, he must have seen with mortification how little he could do to mar the happiness of mortals. I stood in a mere waterspout; she herself was wet, not from my embrace only, but from the splashing of the storm. The candles had guttered out; we were in darkness. I could scarce see anything but the shining of her eyes in the dark room. To her I must have appeared as a silhouette, haloed by rain and the spouting of the ancient Gothic gutter above my head.

Presently we became more calm and confidential; and when that squall, which proved to be the last of the storm, had blown by, fell into a talk of ways and means. It seemed she knew Mr. Robbie, to whom I had been so slenderly accredited by Romaine—was even invited to his house for the evening of Monday, and gave me a sketch of the old gentleman's character, which implied a great deal of penetration in herself, and proved of great use to me in the immediate sequel. It

seemed he was an enthusiastic antiquary, and in particular a fanatic of heraldry. I heard it with delight, for I was myself, thanks to M. de Culemborg, fairly grounded in that science, and acquainted with the blazons of most families of note in Europe. And I had made up my mind—even as she spoke, it was my fixed determination, though I was a hundred miles from saying it—to meet Flora on Monday night as a fellow-guest in Mr. Robbie's house.

I gave her my money—it was, of course, only paper I had brought. I gave it her, to be her marriage-portion, I declared.

“Not so bad a marriage-portion for a private soldier,” I told her laughing, as I passed it through the bars.

“O, Anne, and where am I to keep it?” she cried. “If my aunt should find it! What would I say!”

“Next your heart,” I suggested.

“Then you will always be near your treasure,” she cried, “for you are always there!”

We were interrupted by a sudden clearness that fell upon the night. The clouds dispersed; the stars shone in every part of the heavens; and, consulting my watch, I was startled to find it already hard on five in the morning.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SABBATH DAY.

It was indeed high time I should be gone from Swanston; but what I was to do in the meanwhile was another question. Rowley had received his orders last night: he was to say that I had met a friend, and Mrs. McRankine was not to expect me before morning. A good enough tale in itself; but the dreadful pickle I was in made it out of the question. I could not go home till I had found harbourage, a fire to dry my clothes at, and a bed where I might lie till they were ready.

Fortune favoured me again. I had scarce got to the top of the first hill when I spied a light on my left, about a furlong away. It might be a case of sickness; what else it was likely to be—in so rustic a neighbourhood, and at such an ungodly time of the morning—was beyond my fancy. A faint sound of singing became audible, and gradually swelled as I drew near, until at last I could make out the words, which were singularly appropriate both to the hour and to the condition of the singers. “The cock may crow, the day may daw,” they sang; and sang it with such laxity both in time and tune, and such sentimental complaisance in

the expression, as assured me they had got far into the third bottle at least.

I found a plain rustic cottage by the wayside, of the sort called double, with a signboard over the door; and, the lights within streaming forth and somewhat mitigating the darkness of the morning, I was enabled to decipher the inscription: "The Hunters' Tryst, by Alexander Hendry. Porter, Ales, and British Spirits. Beds."

My first knock put a period to the music, and a voice challenged tipsily from within.

"Who goes there?" it said; and I replied, "A lawful traveller."

Immediately after, the door was unbarred by a company of the tallest lads my eyes had ever rested on, all astonishingly drunk and very decently dressed, and one (who was perhaps the drunkest of the lot) carrying a tallow candle, from which he impartially bedewed the clothes of the whole company. As soon as I saw them I could not help smiling to myself to remember the anxiety with which I had approached. They received me and my hastily-concocted story, that I had been walking from Peebles and had lost my way, with incoherent benignity; jostled me among them into the room where they had been sitting, a plain hedgerow alehouse parlour, with a roaring fire in the chimney and a prodigious number of empty bottles on the floor; and informed me that I was made, by this reception, a temporary member of the *Six-Foot-High Club*, an athletic

society of young men in a good station, who made of the Hunters' Tryst a frequent resort. They told me I had intruded on an "all-night sitting," following upon an "all-day Saturday tramp" of forty miles; and that the members would all be up and "as right as nine-pence" for the noonday service at some neighbouring church—Collingwood, if memory serves me right. At this I could have laughed, but the moment seemed ill-chosen. For, though six feet was their standard, they all exceeded that measurement considerably; and I tasted again some of the sensations of childhood, as I looked up to all these lads from a lower plane, and wondered what they would do next. But the Six-Footers, if they were very drunk, proved no less kind. The landlord and servants of the Hunters' Tryst were in bed and asleep long ago. Whether by natural gift or acquired habit they could suffer pandemonium to reign all over the house, and yet lie ranked in the kitchen like Egyptian mummies, only that the sound of their snoring rose and fell ceaselessly like the drone of a bagpipe. Here the Six-Footers invaded them—in their citadel, so to speak; counted the bunks and the sleepers; proposed to put me in bed to one of the lasses, proposed to have one of the lasses out to make room for me, fell over chairs, and made noise enough to waken the dead: the whole illuminated by the same young torch-bearer, but now with two candles, and rapidly beginning to look like a man in a snowstorm. At last a bed was found for me, my clothes were hung

out to dry before the parlour fire, and I was mercifully left to my repose.

I awoke about nine with the sun shining in my eyes. The landlord came at my summons, brought me my clothes dried and decently brushed, and gave me the good news that the Six-Foot-High Club were all abed and sleeping off their excesses. Where they were bestowed was a puzzle to me until (as I was strolling about the garden patch waiting for breakfast) I came on a barn door, and, looking in, saw all the red faces mixed in the straw like plums in a cake. Quoth the stalwart maid who brought me my porridge and bade me "eat them while they were hot," "Ay, they were a' on the ran-dan last nicht! Hout! they're fine lads, and they'll be nane the waur of it. Forby Farbes's coat: I dinna see wha's to get the creish off that!" she added, with a sigh; in which, identifying Forbes as the torch-bearer, I mentally joined.

It was a brave morning when I took the road; the sun shone, spring seemed in the air, it smelt like April or May, and some over-venturous birds sang in the coppices as I went by. I had plenty to think of, plenty to be grateful for, that gallant morning; and yet I had a twitter at my heart. To enter the city by daylight might be compared to marching on a battery; every face that I confronted would threaten me like the muzzle of a gun; and it came into my head suddenly with how much better a countenance I should be able to do it if I could but improvise a companion. Hard

by Merchiston I was so fortunate as to observe a bulky gentleman in broadcloth and gaiters, stooping with his head almost between his knees, before a stone wall. Seizing occasion by the forelock, I drew up as I came alongside and inquired what he had found to interest him.

He turned upon me a countenance not much less broad than his back.

"Why, sir," he replied, "I was even marvelling at my own indefeasible stupefidity: that I should walk this way every week of my life, weather permitting, and should never before have *noticed* that stone," touching it at the same time with a goodly oak staff.

I followed the indication. The stone, which had been built sideways into the wall, offered traces of heraldic sculpture. At once there came a wild idea into my mind: his appearance tallied with Flora's description of Mr. Robbie; a knowledge of heraldry would go far to clinch the proof; and what could be more desirable than to scrape an informal acquaintance with the man whom I must approach next day with my tale of the drovers, and whom I yet wished to please? I stooped in turn.

"A chevron," I said; "on a chief three mullets? Looks like Douglas, does it not?"

"Yes, sir, it does; you are right," said he; "it *does* look like Douglas; though, without the tinctures, and the whole thing being so battered and broken up, who shall venture an opinion? But allow me to be more personal,

sir. In these degenerate days I am astonished you should display so much proficiency."

"Oh, I was well grounded in my youth by an old gentleman, a friend of my family, and I may say my guardian," said I; "but I have forgotten it since. God forbid I should delude you into thinking me a herald, sir! I am only an ungrammatical amateur."

"And a little modesty does no harm even in a herald," says my new acquaintance graciously.

In short, we fell together on our onward way, and maintained very amicable discourse along what remained of the country road, past the suburbs, and on into the streets of the New Town, which was as deserted and silent as a city of the dead. The shops were closed, no vehicle ran, cats sported in the midst of the sunny causeway; and our steps and voices re-echoed from the quiet houses. It was the high-water, full and strange, of that weekly trance to which the city of Edinburgh is subjected: the apotheosis of the *Sawbath*; and I confess the spectacle wanted not grandeur, however much it may have lacked cheerfulness. There are few religious ceremonies more imposing. As we thus walked and talked in a public seclusion the bells broke out ringing through all the bounds of the city, and the streets began immediately to be thronged with decent church-goers.

"Ah!" said my companion, "there are the bells! Now, sir, as you are a stranger I must offer you the hospitality of my pew. I do not know whether you are

at all used with our Scottish form; but in case you are not I will find your places for you; and Dr. Henry Gray, of St. Mary's (under whom I sit), is as good a preacher as we have to show you."

This put me in a quandary. It was a degree of risk I was scarce prepared for. Dozens of people, who might pass me by in the street with no more than a second look, would go on from the second to the third, and from that to a final recognition, if I were set before them, immobilised in a pew, during the whole time of service. An unlucky turn of the head would suffice to arrest their attention. "Who is that?" they would think: "surely I should know him!" and, a church being the place in all the world where one has least to think of, it was ten to one they would end by remembering me before the benediction. However, my mind was made up: I thanked my obliging friend, and placed myself at his disposal.

Our way now led us into the north-east quarter of the town, among pleasant new faubourgs, to a decent new church of a good size, where I was soon seated by the side of my good Samaritan, and looked upon by a whole congregation of menacing faces. At first the possibility of danger kept me awake; but by the time I had assured myself there was none to be apprehended, and the service was not in the least likely to be enlivened by the arrest of a French spy, I had to resign myself to the task of listening to Dr. Henry Gray.

As we moved out, after this ordeal was over, my

friend was at once surrounded and claimed by his acquaintances of the congregation; and I was rejoiced to hear him addressed by the expected name of Robbie.

So soon as we were clear of the crowd—"Mr. Robbie?" said I, bowing.

"The very same, sir," said he.

"If I mistake not, a lawyer?"

"A writer to His Majesty's Signet, at your service."

"It seems we were predestined to be acquaintances!" I exclaimed. "I have here a card in my pocket intended for you. It is from my family lawyer. It was his last word, as I was leaving, to ask to be remembered kindly, and to trust you would pass over so informal an introduction."

And I offered him the card.

"Ay, ay, my old friend Daniel!" says he, looking on the card. "And how does my old friend Daniel?"

I gave a favourable view of Mr. Romaine's health.

"Well, this is certainly a whimsical incident," he continued. "And since we are thus met already—and so much to my advantage!—the simplest thing will be to prosecute the acquaintance instantly. Let me propose a snack between sermons, a bottle of my particular green seal—and when nobody is looking we can talk blazons, Mr. Ducie!"—which was the name I then used and had already incidentally mentioned, in the vain hope of provoking a return in kind.

"I beg your pardon, sir: do I understand you to invite me to your house?" said I.

"That was the idea I was trying to convey," said he. "We have the name of hospitable people up here; and I would like you to try mine."

"Mr. Robbie, I shall hope to try it some day, but not yet," I replied. "I hope you will not misunderstand me. My business, which brings me to your city, is of a peculiar kind. Till you shall have heard it, and, indeed, till its issue is known, I should feel as if I had stolen your invitation."

"Well, well," said he, a little sobered, "it must be as you wish, though you would hardly speak otherwise if you had committed homicide! Mine is the loss. I must eat alone; a very pernicious thing for a person of my habit of body, content myself with a pint of skinking claret, and meditate the discourse. But about this business of yours: if it is so particular as all that, it will doubtless admit of no delay."

"I must confess, sir, it presses," I acknowledged.

"Then, let us say to-morrow at half-past eight in the morning," said he; "and I hope, when your mind is at rest (and it does you much honour to take it as you do), that you will sit down with me to the postponed meal, not forgetting the bottle. You have my address?" he added, and gave it me—which was the only thing I wanted.

At last, at the level of York Place, we parted with mutual civilities, and I was free to pursue my way, through the mobs of people returning from church, to my lodgings in St. James' Square.

Almost at the house door whom should I overtake but my landlady in a dress of gorgeous severity, and dragging a prize in her wake: no less than Rowley, with the cockade in his hat, and a smart pair of tops to his boots! When I said he was in the lady's wake I spoke but in metaphor. As a matter of fact he was squiring her, with the utmost dignity, on his arm; and I followed them up the stairs, smiling to myself.

Both were quick to salute me as soon as I was perceived, and Mrs. McRankine inquired where I had been. I told her boastfully, giving her the name of the church and the divine, and ignorantly supposing I should have gained caste. But she soon opened my eyes. In the roots of the Scottish character there are knots and contortions that not only no stranger can understand, but no stranger can follow; he walks among explosives; and his best course is to throw himself upon their mercy—"Just as I am, without one plea," a citation from one of the lady's favourite hymns.

The sound she made was unmistakable in meaning, though it was impossible to be written down; and I at once executed the manœuvre I have recommended.

"You must remember I am a perfect stranger in your city," said I. "If I have done wrong, it was in mere ignorance, my dear lady; and this afternoon, if you will be so good as to take me, I shall accompany *you*."

But she was not to be pacified at the moment, and departed to her own quarters murmuring.

"Well, Rowley," said I; "and have you been to church?"

"If you please, sir," he said.

"Well, you have not been any less unlucky than I have," I returned. "And how did you get on with the Scottish form?"

"Well, sir, it was pretty 'ard, the form was, and reether narrow," he replied. "I don't know w'y it is, but it seems to me like as if things were a good bit changed since William Wallace! That was a main queer church she took me to, Mr. Anne! I don't know as I could have sat it out, if she 'adn't 'a' give me pepper-mints. She ain't a bad one at bottom, the old girl; she do pounce a bit, and she do worry, but, law bless you, Mr. Anne, it ain't nothink really—she don't *mean* it. W'y, she was down on me like a 'undredweight of bricks this morning. You see, last night she 'ad me in to supper, and, I beg your pardon, sir, but I took the freedom of playing her a chune or two. She didn't mind a bit; so this morning I began to play to myself, and she flounced in, and flew up, and carried on no end about Sunday!"

"You see, Rowley," said I, "they're all mad up here, and you have to humour them. See and don't quarrel with Mrs. McRankine; and, above all, don't argue with her, or you'll get the worst of it. Whatever she says, touch your forelock and say, 'If you please!' or 'I beg

pardon, ma'am.' And let me tell you one thing: I am sorry, but you have to go to church with her again this afternoon. That's duty, my boy!"

As I had foreseen, the bells had scarce begun before Mrs. McRankine presented herself to be our escort, upon which I sprang up with readiness and offered her my arm. Rowley followed behind. I was beginning to grow accustomed to the risks of my stay in Edinburgh, and it even amused me to confront a new churchful. I confess the amusement did not last until the end; for if Dr. Gray were long, Mr. McCraw was not only longer, but more incoherent, and the matter of his sermon (which was a direct attack, apparently, on all the Churches of the world, my own among the number), where it had not the tonic quality of personal insult, rather inclined me to slumber. But I braced myself for my life, kept up Rowley with the end of a pin, and came through it awake, but no more.

Bethiah was quite conquered by this "mark of grace," though, I am afraid, she was also moved by more worldly considerations. The first is, the lady had not the least objection to go to church on the arm of an elegantly dressed young gentleman, and be followed by a spruce servant with a cockade in his hat. I could see it by the way she took possession of us, found us the places in the Bible, whispered to me the name of the minister, passed us lozenges, which I (for my part) handed on to

Rowley, and at each fresh attention stole a little glance about the church to make sure she was observed. Rowley was a pretty boy; you will pardon me if I also remembered that I was a favourable-looking young man. When we grow elderly, how the room brightens, and begins to look as it ought to look, on the entrance of youth, grace, health, and comeliness! You do not want them for yourself, perhaps not even for your son, but you look on smiling; and when you recall their images—again, it is with a smile. I defy you to see or think of them and not smile with an infinite and intimate, but quite impersonal, pleasure. Well, either I know nothing of women, or that was the case with Bethiah McRankine. She had been to church with a cockade behind her, on the one hand; on the other, her house was brightened by the presence of a pair of good-looking young fellows of the other sex, who were always pleased and deferential in her society and accepted her views as final.

These were sentiments to be encouraged; and, on the way home from church—if church it could be called—I adopted a most insidious device to magnify her interest. I took her into the confidence, that is, of my love affair, and I had no sooner mentioned a young lady with whom my affections were engaged than she turned upon me a face of awful gravity.

“Is she bonny?” she inquired.

I gave her full assurances upon that.

"To what denoamination does she beloang?" came next, and was so unexpected as almost to deprive me of breath.

"Upon my word, ma'am, I have never inquired," cried I; "I only know that she is a heartfelt Christian, and that is enough."

"Ay!" she sighed, "if she has the root of the maitter! There's a remnant practically in most of the denoaminations. There's some in the McGlashanites, and some in the Glassites, and mony in the McMillanites, and there's a leeven even in the Estayblishment."

"I have known some very good Papists even, if you go to that," said I.

"Mr. Ducie, think shame to yoursel'!" she cried.

"Why, my dear madam! I only——" I began.

"You shouldnae jest in sairious maitters," she interrupted.

On the whole, she entered into what I chose to tell her of our idyll with avidity, like a cat licking her whiskers over a dish of cream; and, strange to say—and so expansive a passion is that of love!—that I derived a perhaps equal satisfaction from confiding in that breast of iron. It made an immediate bond: from that hour we seemed to be welded into a family party; and I had little difficulty in persuading her to join us and

to preside over our tea-table. Surely there was never so ill-matched a trio as Rowley, Mrs. McRankine, and the Viscount Anne! But I am of the Apostle's way, with a difference: all things to all women! When I cannot please a woman, hang me in my cravat!

CHAPTER VIII.

EVENTS OF MONDAY: THE LAWYER'S PARTY.

By half-past eight o'clock on the next morning, I was ringing the bell of the lawyer's office in Castle Street, where I found him ensconced at a business table, in a room surrounded by several tiers of green tin cases. He greeted me like an old friend.

"Come away, sir, come away!" said he. "Here is the dentist ready for you, and I think I can promise you that the operation will be practically painless."

"I am not so sure of that, Mr. Robbie," I replied, as I shook hands with him. "But at least there shall be no time lost with me."

I had to confess to having gone a-roving with a pair of drovers and their cattle, to having used a false name, to having murdered or half-murdered a fellow-creature in a scuffle on the moors, and to having suffered a couple of quite innocent men to lie some time in prison on a charge from which I could have immediately freed them. All this I gave him first of all, to be done with the worst of it; and all this he took with gravity, but without the least appearance of surprise.

"Now, sir," I continued, "I expect to have to pay

for my unhappy frolic, but I would like very well if it could be managed without my personal appearance or even the mention of my real name. I had so much wisdom as to sail under false colours in this foolish jaunt of mine; my family would be extremely concerned if they had wind of it; but at the same time, if the case of this Faa has terminated fatally, and there are proceedings against Todd and Candlish, I am not going to stand by and see them vexed, far less punished; and I authorise you to give me up for trial if you think that best—or, if you think it unnecessary, in the meanwhile to make preparations for their defence. I hope, sir, that I am as little anxious to be Quixotic, as I am determined to be just."

"Very fairly spoken," said Mr. Robbie. "It is not much in my line, as doubtless your friend, Mr. Romaine, will have told you. I rarely mix myself up with anything on the criminal side, or approaching it. However, for a young gentleman like you, I may stretch a point, and I daresay I may be able to accomplish more than perhaps another. I will go at once to the Procurator Fiscal's office and inquire."

"Wait a moment, Mr. Robbie," said I. "You forget the chapter of expenses. I had thought, for a beginning, of placing a thousand pounds in your hands."

"My dear sir, you will kindly wait until I render you my bill," said Mr. Robbie severely.

"It seemed to me," I protested, "that coming to you almost as a stranger, and placing in your hands a piece

of business so contrary to your habits, some substantial guarantee of my good faith——”

“Not the way that we do business in Scotland, sir,” he interrupted, with an air of closing the dispute.

“And yet, Mr. Robbie,” I continued, “I must ask you to allow me to proceed. I do not merely refer to the expenses of the case. I have my eye besides on Todd and Candlish. They are thoroughly deserving fellows; they have been subjected through me to a considerable term of imprisonment; and I suggest, sir, that you should not spare money for their indemnification. This will explain,” I added smiling, “my offer of the thousand pounds. It was in the nature of a measure by which you should judge the scale on which I can afford to have this business carried through.”

“I take you perfectly, Mr. Ducie,” said he. “But the sooner I am off, the better this affair is like to be guided. My clerk will show you into the waiting-room and give you the day’s *Caledonian Mercury* and the last *Register* to amuse yourself with in the interval.”

I believe Mr. Robbie was at least three hours gone. I saw him descend from a cab at the door, and almost immediately after I was shown again into his study, where the solemnity of his manner led me to augur the worst. For some time he had the inhumanity to read me a lecture as to the incredible silliness, “not to say immorality,” of my behaviour. “I have the satisfaction in telling you my opinion, because it appears that you

are going to get off scot free," he continued, where, indeed, I thought he might have begun.

"The man, Faa, has been dischairged cured; and the two men, Todd and Candlish, would have been leeberated long ago, if it had not been for their extraordinary loyalty to yourself, Mr. Ducie—or Mr. St. Ivey, as I believe I should now call you. Never a word would either of the two old fools volunteer that in any manner pointed at the existence of such a person; and when they were confronted with Faa's version of the affair, they gave accounts so entirely discrepant with their own former declarations, as well as with each other, that the Fiscal was quite nonplussed, and imagined there was something behind it. You may believe I soon laughed him out of that! And I had the satisfaction of seeing your two friends set free, and very glad to be on the causeway again."

"Oh, sir," I cried, "you should have brought them here."

"No instructions, Mr. Ducie!" said he. "How did I know you wished to renew an acquaintance which you had just terminated so fortunately? And, indeed, to be frank with you, I should have set my face against it, if you had! Let them go! They are paid and contented, and have the highest possible opinion of Mr. St. Ivey! When I gave them fifty pounds apiece—which was rather more than enough, Mr. Ducie, whatever you may think—the man Todd, who has the only tongue of the party, struck his staff on the ground. 'Weel,' says he, 'I aye

said he was a gentleman!' 'Man, Todd,' said I, 'that was just what Mr. St. Ivey said of yourself.'"

"So it was a case of 'Compliments fly when gentle-folk meet.'"

"No, no, Mr. Ducie, man Todd and man Candlish are gone out of your life, and a good riddance! They are fine fellows in their way, but no proper associates for the like of yourself; and do you finally agree to be done with all eccentricity—take up with no more drovers, or rovers, or tinkers, but enjoy the naitural pleesures for which your age, your wealth, your intelligence, and (if I may be allowed to say it) your appearance so completely fit you. And the first of these," quoth he, looking at his watch, "will be to step through to my dining-room and share a bachelor's luncheon."

Over the meal, which was good, Mr. Robbie continued to develop the same theme. "You're, no doubt, what they call a dancing-man?" said he. "Well, on Thursday night there is the Assembly Ball. You must certainly go there, and you must permit me besides to do the honours of the ceety and send you a ticket. I am a thorough believer in a young man being a young man—but no more drovers or rovers, if you love me! Talking of which puts me in mind that you may be short of partners at the Assembly—oh, I have been young myself!—and if ye care to come to anything so portentiously tedious as a tea-party at the house of a bachelor lawyer, consisting mainly of his nieces and nephews, and his grand-nieces and grand-nephews, and

his wards, and generally the whole clan of the descendants of his clients, you might drop in to-night towards seven o'clock. I think I can show you one or two that are worth looking at, and you can dance with them later on at the Assembly."

He proceeded to give me a sketch of one or two eligible young ladies whom I might expect to meet. "And then there's my parteecular friend, Miss Flora," said he. "But I'll make no attempt of a description. You shall see her for yourself."

It will be readily supposed that I accepted his invitation; and returned home to make a toilette worthy of her I was to meet and the good news of which I was the bearer. The toilette, I have reason to believe, was a success. Mr. Rowley dismissed me with a farewell: "Crikey! Mr. Anne, but you do look prime!" Even the stony Bethiah was—how shall I say?—dazzled, but scandalised, by my appearance; and while, of course, she deplored the vanity that led to it, she could not wholly prevent herself from admiring the result.

"Ay, Mr. Ducie, this is a poor employment for a wayfaring Christian man!" she said. "Wi' Christ despised and rejectit in all pairts of the world, and the flag of the Covenant flung doon, you will be muckle better on your knees! However, I'll have to confess that it sets you weel. And if it's the lassie ye're gaun to see the nicht, I suppose I'll just have to excuse ye! Bairns maun be bairns!" she said, with a sigh. "I mind when Mr. McRankine came courtin', and that's lang by-gane—

I mind I had a green gown, passementit, that was thocht to become me to admiration. I was nae just exactly what ye would ca' bonny; but I was pale, penetratin', and interestin'." And she leaned over the stair-rail with a candle to watch my descent as long as it should be possible.

It was but a little party at Mr. Robbie's—by which, I do not so much mean that there were few people, for the rooms were crowded, as that there was very little attempted to entertain them. In one apartment there were tables set out, where the elders were solemnly engaged upon whist; in the other and larger one, a great number of youth of both sexes entertained themselves languidly, the ladies sitting upon chairs to be courted, the gentlemen standing about in various attitudes of insinuation or indifference. Conversation appeared the sole resource, except in so far as it was modified by a number of keepsakes and annuals which lay dispersed upon the tables, and of which the young beaux displayed the illustrations to the ladies. Mr. Robbie himself was customarily in the card-room; only now and again, when he cut out, he made an incursion among the young folks, and rolled about jovially from one to another, the very picture of the general uncle.

It chanced that Flora had met Mr. Robbie in the course of the afternoon. "Now, Miss Flora," he had said, "come early, for I have a Phoenix to show you—one Mr. Ducie, a new client of mine that, I vow, I have fallen in love with"; and he was so good as to add a

word or two on my appearance, from which Flora conceived a suspicion of the truth. She had come to the party, in consequence, on the knife-edge of anticipation and alarm; had chosen a place by the door, where I found her, on my arrival, surrounded by a posse of vapid youths; and, when I drew near, sprang up to meet me in the most natural manner in the world, and, obviously, with a prepared form of words.

"How do you do, Mr. Ducie?" she said. "It is quite an age since I have seen you!"

"I have much to tell you, Miss Gilchrist," I replied. "May I sit down?"

For the artful girl, by sitting near the door, and the judicious use of her shawl, had contrived to keep a chair empty by her side.

She made room for me, as a matter of course, and the youths had the discretion to melt before us. As soon as I was once seated her fan flew out, and she whispered behind it:

"Are you mad?"

"Madly in love," I replied; "but in no other sense."

"I have no patience! You cannot understand what I am suffering!" she said. "What are you to say to Ronald, to Major Chevenix, to my aunt?"

"Your aunt?" I cried, with a start. "*Peccavi!* is she here?"

"She is in the card-room at whist," said Flora.

"Where she will probably stay all the evening!" I suggested.

"She may," she admitted; "she generally does!"

"Well, then, I must avoid the card-room," said I, "which is very much what I had counted upon doing. I did not come here to play cards, but to contemplate a certain young lady to my heart's content—if it can ever be contented!—and to tell her some good news."

"But there are still Ronald and the Major!" she persisted. "They are not card-room fixtures! Ronald will be coming and going. And as for Mr. Chevenix he——"

"Always sits with Miss Flora?" I interrupted. "And they talk of poor St. Ives? I had gathered as much, my dear; and Mr. Ducie has come to prevent it! But pray dismiss these fears! I mind no one but your aunt?"

"Why my aunt?"

"Because your aunt is a lady, my dear, and a very clever lady, and, like all clever ladies, a very rash lady," said I. "You can never count upon them, unless you are sure of getting them in a corner, as I have got you, and talking them over rationally, as I am just engaged on with yourself! It would be quite the same to your aunt to make the worst kind of a scandal, with an equal indifference to my danger and to the feelings of our good host!"

"Well," she said, "and what of Ronald, then? Do you think *he* is above making a scandal? You must know him very little!"

"On the other hand, it is my pretension that I know

him very well!" I replied. "I must speak to Ronald first—not Ronald to me—that is all!"

"Then, please, go and speak to him at once!" she pleaded. "He is there—do you see?—at the upper end of the room, talking to that girl in pink."

"And so lose this seat before I have told you my good news?" I exclaimed. "Catch me! And, besides, my dear one, think a little of me and my good news! I thought the bearer of good news was always welcome! I hoped he might be a little welcome for himself! Consider! I have but one friend; and let me stay by her! And there is only one thing I care to hear; and let me hear it!"

"Oh, Anne," she sighed, "if I did not love you, why should I be so uneasy? I am turned into a coward, dear! Think, if it were the other way round—if you were quite safe and I was in, oh, such danger!"

She had no sooner said it than I was convicted of being a dullard. "God forgive me, dear!" I made haste to reply, "I never saw before that there were two sides to this!" And I told her my tale as briefly as I could, and rose to seek Ronald. "You see, my dear, you are obeyed," I said.

She gave me a look that was a reward in itself; and as I turned away from her, with a strong sense of turning away from the sun, I carried that look in my bosom like a caress. The girl in pink was an arch, ogling person, with a good deal of eyes and teeth, and a great play of shoulders and rattle of conversation. There

could be no doubt, from Mr. Ronald's attitude, that he worshipped the very chair she sat on. But I was quite ruthless. I laid my hand on his shoulder, as he was stooping over her like a hen over a chicken.

"Excuse me for one moment, Mr. Gilchrist!" said I.

He started and span about in answer to my touch, and exhibited a face of inarticulate wonder.

"Yes!" I continued, "it is even myself! Pardon me for interrupting so agreeable a *tête-à-tête*, but you know, my good fellow, we owe a first duty to Mr. Robbie. It would never do to risk making a scene in the man's drawing-room; so the first thing I had to attend to was to have you warned. The name I go by is Ducie, too, in case of accidents."

"I—I say, you know!" cried Ronald. "Deuce take it, what are you doing here?"

"Hush, hush!" said I. "Not the place, my dear fellow—not the place. Come to my rooms, if you like, to-night after the party, or to-morrow in the morning, and we can talk it out over a segar. But here, you know, it really won't do at all."

Before he could collect his mind for an answer, I had given him my address in St. James' Square, and had again mingled with the crowd. Alas! I was not fated to get back to Flora so easily! Mr. Robbie was in the path: he was insatiably loquacious; and as he continued to palaver I watched the insipid youths gather again about my idol, and cursed my fate and my host. He remembered suddenly that I was to attend the Assembly

Ball on Thursday, and had only attended to-night by way of a preparative. This put it into his head to present me to another young lady; but I managed this interview with so much art that, while I was scrupulously politic and even cordial to the fair one, I contrived to keep Robbie beside me all the time and to leave along with him when the ordeal was over. We were just walking away arm in arm, when I spied my friend the Major approaching, stiff as a ramrod and, as usual, obtrusively clean.

"Oh! there's a man I want to know," said I, taking the bull by the horns. "Won't you introduce me to Major Chevenix?"

"At a word, my dear fellow," said Robbie; and "Major!" he cried, "come here and let me present to you my friend Mr. Ducie, who desires the honour of your acquaintance."

The Major flushed visibly, but otherwise preserved his composure. He bowed very low. "I'm not very sure," he said: "I have an idea we have met before?"

"Informally," I said, returning his bow; "and I have long looked forward to the pleasure of regularising our acquaintance."

"You are very good, Mr. Ducie," he returned. "Perhaps you could aid my memory a little? Where was it that I had the pleasure?"

"Oh, that would be telling tales out of school," said I, with a laugh, "and before my lawyer, too!"

"I'll wager," broke in Mr. Robbie, "that, when you

knew my client, Chevenix—the past of our friend Mr. Ducie is an obscure chapter full of horrid secrets—I'll wager, now, you knew him as St. Ivey," says he, nudging me violently.

"I think not, sir," said the Major, with pinched lips.

"Well, I wish he may prove all right!" continued the lawyer, with certainly the worst-inspired jocularly in the world. "I know nothing by him! He may be a swell mobster for me with his aliases. You must put your memory on the rack, Major, and when ye've remembered when and where ye met him, be sure ye tell me."

"I will not fail, sir, said Chevenix.

"Seek to him!" cried Robbie, waving his hand as he departed.

The Major, as soon as we were alone, turned upon me his impassive countenance.

"Well," he said, "you have courage."

"It is undoubted as your honour, sir," I returned, bowing.

"Did you expect to meet me, may I ask?" said he.

"You saw, at least, that I courted the presentation," said I.

"And you were not afraid?" said Chevenix.

"I was perfectly at ease. "I knew I was dealing with a gentleman. Be that your epitaph."

"Well, there are some other people looking for you," he said, "who will make no bones about the point of

honour. The police, my dear sir, are simply agog about you."

"And I think that that was coarse," said I.

"You have seen Miss Gilchrist?" he inquired, changing the subject.

"With whom, I am led to understand, we are on a footing of rivalry?" I asked. "Yes, I have seen her."

"And I was just seeking her," he replied.

I was conscious of a certain thrill of temper; so, I suppose, was he. We looked each other up and down.

"The situation is original," he resumed.

"Quite," said I. "But let me tell you frankly you are blowing a cold coal. I owe you so much for your kindness to the prisoner Champdivers."

"Meaning that the lady's affections are more advantageously disposed of?" he asked, with a sneer. "Thank you, I am sure. And, since you have given me a lead, just hear a word of good advice in your turn. Is it fair, is it delicate, is it like a gentleman, to compromise the young lady by attentions which (as you know very well) can come to nothing?"

I was utterly unable to find words in answer.

"Excuse me if I cut this interview short," he went on. "It seems to me doomed to come to nothing, and there is more attractive metal."

"Yes," I replied, "as you say, it cannot amount to much. You are impotent, bound hand and foot in honour. You know me to be a man falsely accused, and even if you did not know it, from your position as

my rival you have only the choice to stand quite still or to be infamous."

"I would not say that," he returned, with another change of colour. "I may hear it once too often."

With which he moved off straight for where Flora was sitting amidst her court of vapid youths, and I had no choice but to follow him, a bad second, and reading myself, as I went, a sharp lesson on the command of temper.

It is a strange thing how young men in their teens go down at the mere wind of the coming of men of twenty-five and upwards! The vapid ones fled without thought of resistance before the Major and me; a few dallied awhile in the neighbourhood—so to speak, with their fingers in their mouths—but presently these also followed the rout, and we remained face to face before Flora. There was a draught in that corner by the door; she had thrown her pelisse over her bare arms and neck, and the dark fur of the trimming set them off. She shone by contrast; the light played on her smooth skin to admiration, and the colour changed in her excited face. For the least fraction of a second she looked from one to the other of her pair of rival swains, and seemed to hesitate. Then she addressed Chevenix!—

"You are coming to the Assembly, of course, Major Chevenix?" said she.

"I fear not; I fear I shall be otherwise engaged," he

replied. "Even the pleasure of dancing with you, Miss Flora, must give way to duty."

For awhile the talk ran harmlessly on the weather, and then branched off towards the war. It seemed to be by no one's fault; it was in the air, and had to come.

"Good news from the scene of operations," said the Major.

"Good news while it lasts," I said. "But will Miss Gilchrist tell us her private thought upon the war? In her admiration for the victors, does not there mingle some pity for the vanquished?"

"Indeed, sir," she said, with animation, "only too much of it! War is a subject that I do not think should be talked of to a girl. I am, I have to be—what do you call it?—a non-combatant? And to remind me of what others have to do and suffer: no, it is not fair!"

"Miss Gilchrist has the tender female heart," said Chevenix.

"Do not be too sure of that!" she cried. "I would love to be allowed to fight myself!"

"On which side?" I asked.

"Can you ask?" she exclaimed. "I am a Scottish girl!"

"She is a Scottish girl!" repeated the Major, looking at me. "And no one grudges you her pity!"

"And I glory in every grain of it she has to spare," said I. "Pity is akin to love."

"Well, and let us put that question to Miss Gilchrist. It is for her to decide, and for us to bow to the decision. Is pity, Miss Flora, or is admiration, nearest to love?"

"Oh, come," said I, "let us be more concrete. Lay before the lady a complete case: describe your man, then I'll describe *mine*, and Miss Flora shall decide."

"I think I see your meaning," said he, "and I'll try. You think that pity—and the kindred sentiments—have the greatest power upon the heart. I think more nobly of women. To my view, the man they love will first of all command their respect; he will be steadfast—proud, if you please; dry, possibly—but of all things steadfast. They will look at him in doubt; at last they will see that stern face which he presents to all the rest of the world soften to them alone. First, trust, I say. It is so that a woman loves who is worthy of heroes."

"Your man is very ambitious, sir," said I, "and very much of a hero! Mine is a humbler, and, I would fain think, a more human dog. He is one with no particular trust in himself, with no superior steadfastness to be admired for, who sees a lady's face, who hears her voice, and, without any phrase about the matter, falls in love. What does he ask for, then, but pity?—pity for his weakness, pity for his love, which is his life. You would make women always the inferiors, gaping up at your imaginary lover; he, like a marble statue, with his nose in the air! But God has been wiser than you; and the most steadfast of your heroes may prove human,

after all. We appeal to the queen for judgment," I added, turning and bowing before Flora.

"And how shall the queen judge?" she asked. "I must give you an answer that is no answer at all. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth': she goes where her heart goes."

Her face flushed as she said it; mine also, for I read in it a declaration, and my heart swelled for joy. But Chevenix grew pale.

"You make of life a very dreadful kind of lottery, ma'am," said he. "But I will not despair. Honest and unornamental is still my choice."

And I must say he looked extremely handsome and very amusingly like the marble statue with its nose in the air to which I had compared him.

"I cannot imagine how we got upon this subject," said Flora.

"Madame, it was through the war," replied Chevenix.

"All roads lead to Rome," I commented. "What else would you expect Mr. Chevenix and myself to talk of?"

About this time I was conscious of a certain bustle and movement in the room behind me, but did not pay to it that degree of attention which perhaps would have been wise. There came a certain change in Flora's face; she signalled repeatedly with her fan; her eyes appealed to me obsequiously; there could be no doubt that she wanted something—as well as I could make out, that I should go away and leave the field clear for

my rival, which I had not the least idea of doing. At last she rose from her chair with impatience.

"I think it time you were saying good-night, Mr. Ducie!" she said.

I would not in the least see why, and said so.

Whereupon she gave me this appalling answer, "My aunt is coming out of the card-room."

In less time than it takes to tell, I had made my bow and my escape. Looking back from the doorway, I was privileged to see, for a moment, the august profile and gold eyeglasses of Miss Gilchrist issuing from the card-room; and the sight lent me wings. I stood not on the order of my going; and a moment after, I was on the pavement of Castle Street, and the lighted windows shone down on me, and were crossed by ironical shadows of those who had remained behind.

CHAPTER X.

EVENTS OF TUESDAY: THE TOILS CLOSING.

THIS day began with a surprise. I found a letter on my breakfast-table addressed to Edward Ducie, Esquire; and at first I was startled beyond measure. "Conscience doth make cowards of us all!" When I had opened it, it proved to be only a note from the lawyer, enclosing a card for the Assembly Ball on Thursday evening. Shortly after, as I was composing my mind with a segar at one of the windows of the sitting-room, and Rowley, having finished the light share of work that fell to him, sat not far off tootling with great spirit and a marked preference for the upper octave, Ronald was suddenly shown in. I got him a segar, drew in a chair to the side of the fire, and installed him there—I was going to say, at his ease, but no expression could be farther from the truth. He was plainly on pins and needles, did not know whether to take or to refuse the segar, and, after he had taken it, did not know whether to light or to return it. I saw he had something to say; I did not think it was his own something; and I was ready to offer a large bet it was really something of Major Chevenix's.

"Well, and so here you are!" I observed, with point-less cordiality, for I was bound I should do nothing to help him out. If he were, indeed, here running errands for my rival, he might have a fair field, but certainly no favour.

"The fact is," he began, "I would rather see you alone."

"Why, certainly," I replied. "Rowley, you can step into the bedroom. My dear fellow," I continued, "this sounds serious. Nothing wrong, I trust."

"Well, I'll be quite honest," said he. "I *am* a good deal bothered."

"And I bet I know why!" I exclaimed. "And I bet I can put you to rights, too!"

"What do you mean!" he asked.

"You must be hard up," said I, "and all I can say is, you've come to the right place. If you have the least use for a hundred pounds, or any such trifling sum as that, please mention it. It's here, quite at your service."

"I am sure it is most kind of you," said Ronald, "and the truth is, though I can't think how you guessed it, that I really *am* a little behind board. But I haven't come to talk about that."

"No, I dare say!" cried I. "Not worth talking about!" But remember, Ronald, you and I are on different sides of the business. Remember that you did me one of those services that make men friends for ever. And since I have had the fortune to come into

a fair share of money, just oblige me, and consider so much of it as your own."

"No," he said, "I couldn't take it; I couldn't, really. Besides, the fact is, I've come on a very different matter. It's about my sister, St. Ives," and he shook his head menacingly at me.

"You're quite sure?" I persisted. "It's here, at your service—up to five hundred pounds, if you like. Well, all right; only remember where it is, when you do want it."

"Oh, please let me alone!" cried Ronald: "I've come to say something unpleasant; and how on earth can I do it, if you don't give a fellow a chance? It's about my sister, as I said. You can see for yourself that it can't be allowed to go on. It's compromising; it don't lead to anything; and you're not the kind of man (you must feel it yourself) that I can allow my female relatives to have anything to do with. I hate saying this, St. Ives; it looks like hitting a man when he's down, you know; and I told the Major I very much disliked it from the first. However, it had to be said; and now it has been, and, between gentlemen, it shouldn't be necessary to refer to it again."

"It's compromising; it doesn't lead to anything; not the kind of man," I repeated thoughtfully. "Yes, I believe I understand, and shall make haste to put myself *en règle*." I stood up, and laid my segar down. "Mr. Gilchrist," said I, with a bow, "in answer to your very natural observations, I beg to offer myself as a suitor

for your sister's hand. I am a man of title, of which we think lightly in France, but of ancient lineage, which is everywhere prized. I can display thirty-two quarterings without a blot. My expectations are certainly above the average: I believe my uncle's income averages about thirty thousand pounds, though I admit I was not careful to inform myself. Put it anywhere between fifteen and fifty thousand; it is certainly not less."

"All this is very easy to say," said Ronald, with a pitying smile. "Unfortunately, these things are in the air."

"Pardon me,—in Buckinghamshire," said I, smiling.

"Well, what I mean is, my dear St. Ives, that you *can't prove* them," he continued. "They might just as well not be: do you follow me? You can't bring us any third party to back you up."

"Oh, come!" cried I, springing up and hurrying to the table. "You must excuse me!" I wrote Romaine's address. "There is my reference, Mr. Gilchrist. Until you have written to him, and received his negative answer, I have a right to be treated, and I shall see that you treat me, as a gentleman."

He was brought up with a round turn at that.

"I beg your pardon, St. Ives," said he. "Believe me, I had no wish to be offensive. But there's the difficulty of this affair; I can't make any of my points without offence! You must excuse me, it's not my fault. But, at anyrate, you must see for yourself this proposal of marriage is—is merely impossible, my dear fellow.

It's nonsense! Our countries are at war; you are a prisoner."

"My ancestor of the time of the Ligue," I replied, "married a Huguenot lady out of the Saintonge, riding two hundred miles through an enemy's country to bring off his bride; and it was a happy marriage."

"Well!" he began; and then looked down into the fire, and became silent.

"Well?" I asked.

"Well, there's this business of—Goguelat," said he, still looking at the coals in the grate.

"What!" I exclaimed, starting in my chair. "What's that you say?"

"This business about Goguelat," he repeated.

"Ronald," said I, "this is not your doing. These are not your own words. I know where they came from: a coward put them in your mouth."

"St. Ives!" he cried, "why do you make it so hard for me? and where's the use of insulting other people? The plain English is, that I can't hear of any proposal of marriage from a man under a charge like that. You must see it for yourself, man! It's the most absurd thing I ever heard of! And you go on forcing me to argue with you, too!"

"Because I have had an affair of honour which terminated unhappily, you—a young soldier, or next-door to it—refuse my offer? Do I understand you aright?" said I.

"My dear fellow!" he wailed, "of course you can

twist my words, if you like. You *say* it was an affair of honour. Well, I can't, of course, tell you that—I can't—— I mean, you must see that that's just the point! Was it? I don't know."

"I have the honour to inform you," said I.

"Well, other people say the reverse, you see!"

"They lie, Ronald, and I will prove it in time."

"The short and the long of it is, that any man who is so unfortunate as to have such things said about him is not the man to be my brother-in-law!" he cried.

"Do you know who will be my first witness at the court? Arthur Chevenix!" said I.

"I don't care!" he cried, rising from his chair and beginning to pace outrageously about the room. "What do you mean, St. Ives? What is this about? It's like a dream, I declare! You made an offer, and I have refused it. I don't like it, I don't want it; and whatever I did, or didn't, wouldn't matter—my aunt wouldn't hear of it anyway! Can't you take your answer, man?"

"You must remember, Ronald, that we are playing with edged tools," said I. "An offer of marriage is a delicate subject to handle. You have refused, and you have justified your refusal by several statements: first, that I was an impostor; second, that our countries were at war; and third—— No, I will speak," said I; "you can answer when I have done,—and third, that I had dishonourably killed—or was said to have done so—the man Goguelat. Now, my dear fellow, these are very awkward grounds to be taking. From anyone

else's lips I need scarce tell you how I should resent them; but my hands are tied. I have so much gratitude to you, without talking of the love I bear your sister, that you insult me, when you do so, under the cover of a complete impunity. I must feel the pain—and I do feel it acutely—I can do nothing to protect myself.”

He had been anxious enough to interrupt me in the beginning; but now, and after I had ceased, he stood a long while silent.

“St. Ives,” he said at last, “I think I had better go away. This has been very irritating. I never at all meant to say anything of the kind, and I apologise to you. I have all the esteem for you that one gentleman should have for another. I only meant to tell you—to show you what had influenced my mind; and that, in short, the thing was impossible. One thing you may be quite sure of: *I* shall do nothing against you. Will you shake hands before I go away?” he blurted out.

“Yes,” said I, “I agree with you—the interview has been irritating. Let bygones be bygones. Good-bye, Ronald.”

“Good-bye, St. Ives!” he returned. “I’m heartily sorry.”

And with that he was gone.

The windows of my own sitting-room looked towards the north; but the entrance passage drew its light from the direction of the square. Hence I was able to observe Ronald’s departure, his very disheartened gait,

and the fact that he was joined, about half-way, by no less a man than Major Chevenix. At this, I could scarce keep from smiling; so unpalatable an interview must be before the pair of them, and I could hear their voices, clashing like crossed swords, in that eternal antiphony of "I told you," and "I told you not." Without doubt, they had gained very little by their visit; but then I had gained less than nothing, and had been bitterly dispirited into the bargain. Ronald had stuck to his guns and refused me to the last. It was no news; but, on the other hand, it could not be contorted into good news. I was now certain that during my temporary absence in France, all irons would be put into the fire, and the world turned upside down, to make Flora disown the obtrusive Frenchman and accept Chevenix. Without doubt she would resist these instances: but the thought of them did not please me, and I felt she should be warned and prepared for the battle.

It was no use to try and see her now, but I promised myself early that evening to return to Swanston. In the meantime I had to make all my preparations, and look the coming journey in the face. Here in Edinburgh I was within four miles of the sea, yet the business of approaching random fishermen with my hat in the one hand and a knife in the other, appeared so desperate, that I saw nothing for it but to retrace my steps over the northern counties, and knock a second time at the doors of Birchell Fenn. To do this, money.

would be necessary; and after leaving my paper in the hands of Flora I had still a balance of about fifteen hundred pounds. Or rather I may say I had them and I had them not; for after my luncheon with Mr. Robbie I had placed the amount, all but thirty pounds of change, in a bank in George Street, on a deposit receipt in the name of Mr. Rowley. This I had designed to be my gift to him, in case I must suddenly depart. But now, thinking better of the arrangement, I despatched my little man, cockade and all, to lift the fifteen hundred.

He was not long gone, and returned with a flushed face, and the deposit receipt still in his hand.

"No go, Mr. Anne," says he.

"How's that?" I inquired.

"Well, sir, I found the place all right, and no mistake," said he. "But I tell you what gave me a blue fright! There was a customer standing by the door, and I reckonised him! Who do you think it was, Mr. Anne? W'y, that same Red-Breast—him I had breakfast with near Aylesbury."

"You are sure you are not mistaken?" I asked.

"Certain sure," he replied. "Not Mr. Lavender, I don't mean, sir; I mean the other party. 'Wot's he doing here?' says I. 'It don't look right.'"

"Not by any means," I agreed.

I walked to and fro in the apartment reflecting. This particular Bow Street runner might be here by accident; but it was to imagine a singular play of

coincidence that he, who had met Rowley and spoken with him in the "Green Dragon," hard by Aylesbury, should be now in Scotland, where he could have no legitimate business, and by the doors of the bank where Rowley kept his account.

"Rowley," said I, "he didn't see you, did he?"

"Never a fear," quoth Rowley. "W'y Mr. Anne, sir, if he 'ad, you wouldn't have seen *me* any more! I ain't a hass, sir!"

"Well, my boy, you can put that receipt in your pocket. You'll have no more use for it till you're quite clear of me. Don't lose it, though; it's your share of the Christmas-box: fifteen hundred pounds all for yourself."

"Begging your pardon, Mr. Anne, sir, but wot for!" said Rowley.

"To set up a public-house upon," said I.

"If you'll excuse me, sir, I ain't got any call to set up a public-house, sir," he replied stoutly. "And I tell you wot, sir, it seems to me I'm reether young for the billet. I'm your body servant, Mr. Anne, or else I'm nothink."

"Well Rowley," I said, "I'll tell you what it's for. It's for the good service you have done me, of which I don't care—and don't dare—to speak. It's for your loyalty and cheerfulness, my dear boy. I had meant it for you; but to tell you the truth, it's past mending now—it has to be yours. Since that man is waiting by the bank, the money can't be touched until I'm gone."

"Until you're gone, sir?" re-echoed Rowley. "You don't go anywheres without me, I can tell you that, Mr. Anne, sir!"

"Yes, my boy," said I, "we are going to part very soon now; probably to-morrow. And it's for my sake, Rowley! Depend upon it, if there was any reason at all for that Bow Street man being at the bank, he was not there to look out for *you*. How they could have found out about the account so early is more than I can fathom; some strange coincidence must have played me false! But there the fact is; and Rowley, I'll not only have to say farewell to you presently, I'll have to ask you to stay indoors until I can say it. Remember, my boy, it's only so that you can serve me now."

"W'y, sir, you say the word, and of course I'll do it!" he cried. "'Nothink by 'alves,' is my motto! I'm your man, through thick and thin, live or die, I am!"

In the meantime there was nothing to be done till towards sunset. My only chance now was to come again as quickly as possible to speech of Flora, who was my only practicable banker; and not before evening was it worth while to think of that. I might compose myself as well as I was able over the *Caledonian Mercury*, with its ill news of the campaign of France and belated documents about the retreat from Russia; and, as I sat there by the fire, I was sometimes all awake with anger and mortification at what I was reading, and sometimes again I would be three parts asleep as

I dozed over the barren items of home intelligence. "Lately arrived"—this is what I suddenly stumbled on—"at Dumbreck's Hotel, the Viscount of Saint-Yves."

"Rowley," said I.

"If you please, Mr. Anne, sir," answered the obsequious, lowering his pipe.

"Come and look at this, my boy," said I, holding out the paper.

"My crikey!" said he. "That's 'im, sir, sure enough!"

"Sure enough, Rowley," said I. "He's on the trail. He has fairly caught up with us. He and this Bow Street man have come together, I would swear. And now here is the whole field, quarry, hounds and hunters, all together in this city of Edinburgh."

"And wot are you goin' to do now, sir? Tell you wot, let me take it in 'and, please! Gimme a minute, and I'll disguise myself, and go out to this Dum—to this hotel, leastways, sir—and see wot he's up to. You put your trust in me, Mr. Anne: I'm fly, don't you make no mistake about it. I'm all a-growing and a-blowing, I am."

"Not one foot of you," said I. "You are a prisoner, Rowley, and make up your mind to that. So am I, or next door to it. I showed it you for a caution; if you go on the streets, it spells death to me, Rowley."

"If you please, sir," says Rowley.

"Come to think of it," I continued, "you must take a cold, or something. No good of awakening Mrs. McRankine's suspicions."

"A cold?" he cried, recovering immediately from his depression. "I can do it, Mr. Anne."

And he proceeded to sneeze and cough and blow his nose, till I could not restrain myself from smiling.

"Oh, I tell you, I know a lot of them dodges," he observed proudly.

"Well, they come in very handy," said I.

"I'd better go at once and show it to the old gal, 'adn't I?" he asked.

I told him, by all means; and he was gone upon the instant, gleeful as though to a game of football.

"I took up the paper and read carelessly on, my thoughts engaged with my immediate danger, till I struck on the next paragraph:

"In connection with the recent horrid murder in the Castle, we are desired to make public the following intelligence. The soldier, Champdivers, is supposed to be in the neighbourhood of this city. He is about the middle height or rather under, of a pleasing appearance and highly genteel address. When last heard of he wore a fashionable suit of pearl-grey, and boots with fawn-coloured tops. He is accompanied by a servant about sixteen years of age, speaks English without any accent, and passed under the *alias* of Ramornie. A reward is offered for his apprehension."

In a moment I was in the next room, stripping from me the pearl-coloured suit!

I confess I was now a good deal agitated. It is difficult to watch the toils closing slowly and surely about

you, and to retain your composure; and I was glad that Rowley was not present to spy on my confusion. I was flushed, my breath came thick; I cannot remember a time when I was more put out.

And yet I must wait and do nothing, and partake of my meals, and entertain the ever-garrulous Rowley, as though I were entirely my own man. And if I did not require to entertain Mrs. McRankine also, that was but another drop of bitterness in my cup! For what ailed my landlady, that she should hold herself so severely aloof, that she should refuse conversation, that her eyes should be reddened, that I should so continually hear the voice of her private supplications sounding through the house? I was much deceived, or she had read the insidious paragraph and recognised the comminated pearl-grey suit. I remember now a certain air with which she had laid the paper on my table, and a certain sniff, between sympathy and defiance, with which she had announced it: "There's your *Mercury* for ye!"

In this direction, at least, I saw no pressing danger; her tragic countenance betokened agitation; it was plain she was wrestling with her conscience, and the battle still hung dubious. The question of what to do troubled me extremely. I could not venture to touch such an intricate and mysterious piece of machinery as my landlady's spiritual nature; it might go off at a word, and in any direction, like a badly-made firework. And while I praised myself extremely for my wisdom in the past,

that I had made so much a friend of her, I was all abroad as to my conduct in the present. There seemed an equal danger in pressing and in neglecting the accustomed marks of familiarity. The one extreme looked like impudence, and might annoy; the other was a practical confession of guilt. Altogether, it was a good hour for me when the dusk began to fall in earnest on the streets of Edinburgh, and the voice of an early watchman bade me set forth.

I reached the neighbourhood of the cottage before seven; and as I breasted the steep ascent which leads to the garden wall, I was struck with surprise to hear a dog. Dogs I had heard before, but only from the hamlet on the hillside above. Now, this dog was in the garden itself, where it roared aloud in paroxysms of fury, and I could hear it leaping and straining on the chain. I waited some while, until the brute's fit of passion had roared itself out. Then, with the utmost precaution, I drew near again, and finally approached the garden wall. So soon as I had clapped my head above the level, however, the barking broke forth again with redoubled energy. Almost at the same time, the door of the cottage opened, and Ronald and the Major appeared upon the threshold with a lantern. As they so stood, they were almost immediately below me, strongly illuminated, and within easy earshot. The Major pacified the dog, who took instead to low, uneasy growling intermingled with occasional yelps.

"Good thing I brought Towzer!" said Chevenix.

"Damn him, I wonder where he is!" said Ronald; and he moved the lantern up and down, and turned the night into a shifting puzzle-work of gleam and shadow. "I think I'll make a sally."

"I don't think you will," replied Chevenix. "When I agreed to come out here and do sentry-go, it was on one condition, Master Ronald: don't you forget that! Military discipline, my boy! Our beat is this path close about the house. Down, Towzer! good boy, good boy—gently, then!" he went on, caressing his confounded monster.

"To think! The beggar may be hearing us this minute!" cried Ronald.

"Nothing more probable," said the Major. "You there, St. Ives?" he added, in a distinct but guarded voice. "I only want to tell you, you had better go home. Mr. Gilchrist and I take watch and watch."

The game was up. "*Beaucoup de plaisir!*" I replied, in the same tones. "*Il fait un peu froid pour veiller; gardez-vous des engelures!*"

I suppose it was done in a moment of ungovernable rage; but in spite of the excellent advice he had given to Ronald the moment before, Chevenix slipped the chain, and the dog sprang, straight as an arrow, up the bank. I stepped back, picked up a stone of about twelve pounds weight, and stood ready. With a bound the beast landed on the cope-stone of the wall; and, almost in the same instant, my missile caught him fair in the face. He gave a stifled cry, went tumbling back

where he had come from, and I could hear the twelve-pounder accompany him in his fall. Chevenix, at the same moment, broke out in a roaring voice: "The hell-hound! If he's killed my dog!" and I judged, upon all grounds, it was as well to be off.

CHAPTER X.

EVENTS OF WEDNESDAY: THE UNIVERSITY OF CRAMOND.

I AWOKE to much diffidence, even to a feeling that might be called the beginnings of panic, and lay for hours in my bed considering the situation. Seek where I pleased, there was nothing to encourage me and plenty to appal. They kept a close watch about the cottage; they had a beast of a watch-dog—at least, unless I had settled it; and if I had, I knew its bereaved master would only watch the more indefatigably for the loss. In the pardonable ostentation of love I had given all the money I could spare to Flora; I had thought it glorious that the hunted exile should come down, like Jupiter, in a shower of gold, and pour thousands in the lap of the beloved. Then I had in an hour of arrant folly buried what remained to me in a bank in George Street. And now I must get back the one or the other; and which? and how?

As I tossed in my bed, I could see three possible courses, all extremely perilous. First, Rowley might have been mistaken; the bank might not be watched; it might still be possible for him to draw the money on the deposit receipt. Second, I might apply again to

Robbie. Or, third, I might dare everything, go to the Assembly Ball, and speak with Flora under the eyes of all Edinburgh. This last alternative, involving as it did the most horrid risks, and the delay of forty-eight hours, I did but glance at with an averted head, and turned again to the consideration of the others. It was the likeliest thing in the world that Robbie had been warned to have no more to do with me. The whole policy of the Gilchrists was in the hands of Chevenix; and I thought this was a precaution so elementary that he was certain to have taken it. If he had not, of course I was all right: Robbie would manage to communicate with Flora; and by four o'clock I might be on the south road and, I was going to say, a free man. Lastly, I must assure myself with my own eyes whether the bank in George Street were beleaguered.

I called to Rowley and questioned him tightly as to the appearance of the Bow Street officer.

"What sort of looking man is he, Rowley?" I asked, as I began to dress.

"Wot sort of a looking man he is?" repeated Rowley. "Well, I don't very well know wot you would say, Mr. Anne. He ain't a beauty, any'ow."

"Is he tall?"

"Tall? Well, no, I shouldn't say *tall*, Mr. Anne."

"Well, then, is he short?"

"Short? No, I don't think I would say he was what you would call *short*. No, not piticular short, sir."

"Then, I suppose, he must be about the middle height?"

"Well, you might say it, sir; but not remarkable so." I smothered an oath.

"Is he clean-shaved?" I tried him again.

"Clean-shaved?" he repeated, with the same air of anxious candour.

"Good heaven, man, don't repeat my words like a parrot!" I cried. "Tell me what the man was like: it is of the first importance that I should be able to recognise him."

"I'm trying to, Mr. Anne. But *clean-shaved*? I don't seem to rightly get hold of that p'int. Sometimes it might appear to me like as if he was; and sometimes like as if he wasn't. No, it wouldn't surprise me now if you was to tell me he 'ad a bit o' whisker."

"Was the man red-faced?" I roared, dwelling on each syllable.

"I don't think you need go for to get cross about it, Mr. Anne!" said he. "I'm tellin' you every blessed thing I see! Red-faced? Well, no, not as you would remark upon."

A dreadful calm fell upon me.

"Was he anywise pale?" I asked.

"Well, it don't seem to me as though he were. But I tell you truly, I didn't take much heed to that."

"Did he look like a drinking man?"

"Well, no. If you please, sir, he looked more like an eating one."

"Oh, he was stout, was he?"

"No, sir. I couldn't go so far as that. No, he wasn't not to say *stout*. If anything, rather."

I need not go on with the infuriating interview. It ended as it began, except that Rowley was in tears, and that I had acquired one fact. The man was drawn for me as being of any height you like to mention, and of any degree of corpulence or leanness; clean-shaved or not, as the case might be; the colour of his hair Rowley "could not take it upon himself to put a name on"; that of his eyes he thought to have been blue—nay, it was the one point on which he attained to a kind of tearful certainty. "I'll take my davy on it," he asseverated. They proved to have been as black as sloes, very little and very near together. So much for the evidence of the artless! And the fact, or rather the facts, acquired? Well, they had to do not with the person but with his clothing. The man wore knee-breeches and white stockings; his coat was "some kind of a lightish colour—or betwixt that and dark"; and he wore a "moleskin weskit." As if this were not enough, he presently haled me from my breakfast in a prodigious flutter, and showed me an honest and rather venerable citizen passing in the Square.

"That's *him*, sir," he cried, "the very moral of him! Well, this one is better dressed, and p'raps a trifle taller; and in the face he don't favour him noways at all, sir. No, not when I come to look again, 'e don't seem to favour him noways."

"Jackass!" said I, and I think the greatest stickler for manners will admit the epithet to have been justified.

Meanwhile the appearance of my landlady added a great load of anxiety to what I already suffered. It was plain that she had not slept; equally plain that, she had wept copiously. She sighed, she groaned, she drew in her breath, she shook her head, as she waited on table. In short, she seemed in so precarious a state, like a petard three times charged with hysteria, that I did not dare to address her; and stole out of the house on tiptoe, and actually ran downstairs, in the fear that she might call me back. It was plain that this degree of tension could not last long.

It was my first care to go to George Street, which I reached (by good luck) as a boy was taking down the bank shutters. A man was conversing with him; he had white stockings and a moleskin waistcoat, and was as ill-looking a rogue as you would want to see in a day's journey. This seemed to agree fairly well with Rowley's *signalement*: he had declared emphatically (if you remember), and had stuck to it besides, that the companion of the great Lavender was no beauty.

Thence I made my way to Mr. Robbie's, where I rang the bell. A servant answered the summons, and told me the lawyer was engaged, as I had half expected.

"Wha shall I say was callin'?" she pursued; and when I had told her "Mr. Ducie," "I think this'll be for you, then?" she added, and handed me a letter from the hall table. It ran:

"DEAR MR. DUCIE,
"My single advice to you is to leave *quam primum* for the
South.
Yours, T. ROBBIE."

That was short and sweet. It emphatically extinguished hope in one direction. No more was to be gotten of Robbie; and I wondered, from my heart, how much had been told him. Not too much, I hoped, for I liked the lawyer who had thus deserted me, and I placed a certain reliance in the discretion of Chevenix. He would not be merciful; on the other hand, I did not think he would be cruel without cause.

It was my next affair to go back along George Street, and assure myself whether the man in the moleskin vest was still on guard. There was no sign of him on the pavement. Spying the door of a common stair nearly opposite the bank, I took it in my head that this would be a good point of observation, crossed the street, entered with a businesslike air and fell immediately against the man in the moleskin vest. I stopped and apologised to him; he replied in an unmistakable English accent, thus putting the matter almost beyond doubt. After this encounter I must, of course, ascend to the top story, ring the bell of a suite of apartments, inquire for Mr. Vavasour, learn (with no great surprise) that he did not live there, come down again and, again politely saluting the man from Bow Street, make my escape at last into the street.

I was now driven back upon the Assembly Ball. Robbie had failed me. The bank was watched; it would

never do to risk Rowley in that neighbourhood. All I could do was to wait until the morrow evening, and present myself at the Assembly, let it end as it might. But I must say I came to this decision with a good deal of genuine fright; and here I came for the first time to one of those places where my courage stuck. I do not mean that my courage boggled and made a bit of a bother over it, as it did over the escape from the Castle; I mean, stuck, like a stopped watch or a dead man. Certainly I would go to the ball; certainly I must see this morning about my clothes. That was all decided. But the most of the shops were on the other side of the valley, in the Old Town; and it was now my strange discovery that I was physically unable to cross the North Bridge! It was as though a precipice had stood between us, or the deep sea had intervened. Nearer to the Castle my legs refused to bear me.

I told myself this was mere superstition; I made wagers with myself—and gained them; I went down on the esplanade of Princes Street, walked and stood there, alone and conspicuous, looking across the garden at the old grey bastions of the fortress, where all these troubles had begun. I cocked my hat, set my hand on my hip, and swaggered on the pavement, confronting detection. And I found I could do all this with a sense of exhilaration that was not unpleasing, and with a certain *crânerie* of manner that raised me in my own esteem. And yet there was one thing I could not bring my mind to face up to, or my limbs to execute; and that

was to cross the valley into the Old Town. It seemed to me I must be arrested immediately if I had done so; I must go straight into the twilight of a prison cell, and pass straight thence to the gross and final embraces of the nightcap and the halter. And yet it was from no reasoned fear of the consequences that I could not go. I was unable. My horse baulked, and there was an end!

My nerve was gone: here was a discovery for a man in such imminent peril, set down to so desperate a game, which I could only hope to win by continual luck and unflagging effrontery! The strain had been too long continued, and my nerve was gone. I fell into what they call panic fear, as I have seen soldiers do on the alarm of a night attack, and turned out of Princes Street at random as though the devil were at my heels. In St. Andrews' Square, I remember vaguely hearing someone call out. I paid no heed, but pressed on blindly. A moment after, a hand fell heavily on my shoulder, and I thought I had fainted. Certainly the world went black about me for some seconds; and when that spasm passed I found myself standing face to face with the "cheerful extravagant," in what sort of disarray I really dare not imagine, dead white at least, shaking like an aspen, and mowing at the man with speechless lips. And this was the soldier of Napoleon, and the gentleman who intended going next night to an Assembly Ball! I am the more particular in telling of my breakdown, because it was my only experience of the sort;

and it is a good tale for officers. I will allow no man to call me coward; I have made my proofs; few men more. And yet I (come of the best blood in France and inured to danger from a child) did, for some ten or twenty minutes, make this hideous exhibition of myself on the streets of the New Town of Edinburgh.

With my first available breath I begged his pardon. I was of an extremely nervous disposition, recently increased by late hours; I could not bear the slightest start.

He seemed much concerned. "You must be in a devil of a state!" said he; "though of course it was my fault—damnably silly, vulgar sort of thing to do! A thousand apologies! But you really must be run down; you should consult a medico. My dear sir, a hair of the dog that bit you is clearly indicated. A touch of Blue Ruin, now? Or, come: it's early, but is man the slave of hours? what do you say to a chop and a bottle in Dumbreck's Hotel?"

I refused all false comfort; but when he went on to remind me that this was the day when the University of Cramond met; and to propose a five-mile walk into the country and a dinner in the company of young asses like himself, I began to think otherwise. I had to wait until to-morrow evening, at anyrate; this might serve as well as anything else to bridge the dreary hours. The country was the very place for me: and walking is an excellent sedative for the nerves. Remembering poor Rowley, feigning a cold in our lodgings and immediately under the guns of the formidable and now doubtful

Bethiah, I asked if I might bring my servant. "Poor devil! it is dull for him," I explained.

"The merciful man is merciful to his ass," observed my sententious friend. "Bring him by all means!

‘The harp, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried by an orphan boy;’

and I have no doubt the orphan boy can get some cold victuals in the kitchen, while the Senatus dines."

Accordingly, being now quite recovered from my unmanly condition, except that nothing could yet induce me to cross the North Bridge, I arranged for my ball dress at a shop in Leith Street, where I was not served ill, cut out Rowley from his seclusion, and was ready along with him at the trysting-place, the corner of Duke Street and York Place, by a little after two. The University was represented in force: eleven persons, including ourselves, Byfield the aëronaut, and the tall lad, Forbes, whom I had met on the Sunday morning, bedewed with tallow, at the "Hunters' Rest." I was introduced; and we set off by way of Newhaven and the sea beach; at first through pleasant country roads, and afterwards along a succession of bays of a fairylike prettiness, to our destination—Cramond on the Almond—a little hamlet on a little river, embowered in woods, and looking forth over a great flat of quicksand to where a little islet stood planted in the sea. It was miniature scenery, but charming of its kind. The air of this good February afternoon was bracing, but not cold. All the

way my companions were skylarking, jesting and making puns, and I felt as if a load had been taken off my lungs and spirits, and skylarked with the best of them.

Byfield I observed, because I had heard of him before, and seen his advertisements, not at all because I was disposed to feel interest in the man. He was dark and bilious and very silent; frigid in his manners, but burning internally with a great fire of excitement; and he was so good as to bestow a good deal of his company and conversation (such as it was) upon myself, who was not in the least grateful. If I had known how I was to be connected with him in the immediate future, I might have taken more pains.

In the hamlet of Cramond there is a hostelry of no very promising appearance, and here a room had been prepared for us, and we sat down to table.

"Here you will find no guttling or gormandising, no turtle or nightingales' tongues," said the extravagant, whose name, by the way, was Dalmahoy. "The device, sir, of the University of Cramond is Plain Living and High Drinking."

Grace was said by the Professor of Divinity, in a macaronic Latin, which I could by no means follow, only I could hear it rhymed, and I guessed it to be more witty than reverent. After which the *Senatus Academicus* sat down to rough plenty in the shape of rizzar'd haddocks and mustard, a sheep's head, a haggis, and other delicacies of Scotland. The dinner was washed down with brown stout in bottle, and as soon

as the cloth was removed, glasses, boiling water, sugar, and whisky were set out for the manufacture of toddy. I played a good knife and fork, did not shun the bowl, and took part, so far as I was able, in the continual fire of pleasantry with which the meal was seasoned. Greatly daring, I ventured, before all these Scotsmen, to tell Sim's Tale of Tweedie's dog; and I was held to have done such extraordinary justice to the dialect, "for a Southron," that I was immediately voted in the Chair of Scots, and became, from that moment, a full member of the University Cramond. A little after, I found myself entertaining them with a song; and a little after—perhaps a little in consequence—it occurred to me that I had had enough, and would be very well inspired to take French leave. It was not difficult to manage, for it was nobody's business to observe my movements, and conviviality had banished suspicion.

I got easily forth of the chamber, which reverberated with the voices of these merry and learned gentlemen, and breathed a long breath. I had passed an agreeable afternoon and evening, and I had apparently escaped scot free. Alas! when I looked into the kitchen, there was my monkey, drunk as a lord, toppling on the edge of the dresser, and performing on the flageolet to an audience of the house lasses and some neighbouring ploughmen.

I routed him promptly from his perch, stuck his hat on, put his instrument in his pocket, and set off with him for Edinburgh.

His limbs were of paper, his mind quite in abeyance; I must uphold and guide him, prevent his frantic dives, and set him continually on his legs again. At first he sang wildly, with occasional outbursts of causeless laughter. Gradually an inarticulate melancholy succeeded; he wept gently at times; would stop in the middle of the road, say firmly "No, no, no," and then fall on his back: or else address me solemnly as "M'lord" and fall on his face by way of variety. I am afraid I was not always so gentle with the little pig as I might have been, but really the position was unbearable. We made no headway at all, and I suppose we were scarce gotten a mile away from Cramond, when the whole *Senatus Academicus* was heard hailing, and doubling the pace to overtake us.

Some of them were fairly presentable; and they were all Christian martyrs compared to Rowley; but they were in a frolicsome and rollicking humour that promised danger as we approached the town. They sang songs, they ran races, they fenced with their walking-sticks and umbrellas; and, in spite of this violent exercise, the fun grew only the more extravagant with the miles they traversed. Their drunkenness was deep-seated and permanent, like fire in a peat; or rather—to be quite just to them—it was not so much to be called drunkenness at all, as the effect of youth and high spirits—a fine night, and the night young, a good road under foot, and the world before you!

I had left them once somewhat unceremoniously; I

could not attempt it a second time; and, burthened as I was with Mr. Rowley, I was really glad of assistance. But I saw the lamps of Edinburgh draw near on their hill-top with a good deal of uneasiness, which increased, after we had entered the lighted streets, to positive alarm. All the passers-by were addressed, some of them by name. A worthy man was stopped by Forbes. "Sir," said he, "in the name of the Senatus of the University of Cramond, I confer upon you the degree of LL.D.," and with the words he bonneted him. Conceive the predicament of St. Ives, committed to the society of these outrageous youths, in a town where the police and his cousin were both looking for him! So far, we had pursued our way unmolested, although raising a clamour fit to wake the dead; but at last, in Abercromby Place, I believe—at least it was a crescent of highly respectable houses fronting on a garden—Byfield and I, having fallen somewhat in the rear with Rowley, came to a simultaneous halt. Our ruffians were beginning to wrench off bells and doorplates.

"Oh, I say!" says Byfield, "this is too much of a good thing! Confound it, I'm a respectable man—a public character, by George! I can't afford to get taken up by the police."

"My own case exactly," said I.

"Here, let's bilk them," said he.

And we turned back and took our way down-hill again.

It was none too soon: voices and alarm-bells

sounded; watchmen here and there began to spring their rattles; it was plain the University of Cramond would soon be at blows with the police of Edinburgh! Byfield and I, running the semi-inanimate Rowley before us, made good despatch, and did not stop till we were several streets away, and the hubbub was already softened by distance.

"Well, sir," said he, "we are well out of that! Did ever anyone see such a pack of young barbarians?"

"We are properly punished, Mr. Byfield; we had no business there," I replied.

"No, indeed, sir, you may well say that! Outrageous! And my ascension announced for Friday, you know!" cried the aeronaut. "A pretty scandal! Byfield the aeronaut at the police-court! Tut-tut! Will you be able to get your rascal home, sir? Allow me to offer you my card. I am staying at Walker and Poole's Hotel, sir, where I should be pleased to see you."

"The pleasure would be mutual, sir," said I, but I must say my heart was not in my words, and as I watched Mr. Byfield departing I desired nothing less than to pursue the acquaintance.

One more ordeal remained for me to pass. I carried my senseless load upstairs to our lodging, and was admitted by the landlady in a tall white nightcap and with an expression singularly grim. She lighted us into the sitting-room; where, when I had seated Rowley in a chair, she dropped me a cast-iron courtesy. I

smelt gunpowder on the woman. Her voice tottered with emotion.

"I give ye nottice, Mr. Ducie," said she. "Dacent folks' houses . . ."

And at that apparently temper cut off her utterance, and she took herself off without more words.

I looked about me at the room, the goggling Rowley, the extinguished fire; my mind reviewed the laughable incidents of the day and night; and I laughed out loud to myself—lonely and cheerless laughter! . . .

[*At this point the Author's MS. breaks off: what follows is the work of MR. A. T. QUILLER-COUCH.*]

CHAPTER XL

EVENTS OF THURSDAY: THE ASSEMBLY BALL.

BUT I awoke to the chill reminder of dawn, and found myself no master even of cheerless mirth. I had supped with the *Senatus Academicus* of Cramond: so much my head informed me. It was Thursday, the day of the Assembly Ball. But the ball was fixed by the card for 8 P.M., and I had, therefore, twelve mortal hours to wear through as best I could. Doubtless it was this reflection which prompted me to leap out of bed instanter and ring for Mr. Rowley and my shaving water.

Mr. Rowley, it appeared, was in no such hurry. I tugged a second time at the bell-rope. A groan answered me: and there in the doorway stood, or rather titubated, my paragon of body-servants. He was collarless, unkempt; his face a tinted map of shame and bodily disorder. His hand shook on the hot-water can, and spilled its contents into his shoes. I opened on him with a tirade, but had no heart to continue. The fault, after all, was mine: and it argued something like heroism in the lad that he had fought his nausea down and come up to time.

"But not smiling," I assured him.

"O, please, Mr. Anne. Go on, sir; I deserve it. But I'll never do it again, strike me sky-blue scarlet!"

"In so far as that differed from your present colouring, I believe," said I, "it would be an improvement."

"Never again, Mr. Anne."

"Certainly not, Rowley. Even to good men this may happen once: beyond that, carelessness shades off into depravity."

"Yessir."

"You gave a good deal of trouble last night. I have yet to meet Mrs. McRankine."

"As for that, Mr. Anne," said he, with an incongruous twinkle in his bloodshot eye, "she've been up with a tray: dry toast and a pot of tea. The old gal's bark is worse than her bite, sir, begging your pardon, and meaning as she's a decent one, she is."

"I was fearing that might be just the trouble," I answered.

One thing was certain. Rowley, that morning, should not be entrusted with a razor and the handling of my chin. I sent him back to his bed, with orders not to rise from it without permission; and went about my toilette deliberately. In spite of the lad, I did not enjoy the prospect of Mrs. McRankine.

I enjoyed it so little, indeed, that I fell to poking the sitting-room fire when she entered with the *Mercury*; and read the *Mercury* assiduously while she brought in breakfast. She set down the tray with a slam and

stood beside it, her hands on her hips, her whole attitude breathing challenge.

"Well, Mrs. McRankine?" I began, upturning a hypocritical eye from the newspaper.

"'Well,' is it? Nhm!"

I lifted the breakfast cover, and saw before me a damnatory red herring.

"Rowley was very foolish last night," I remarked, with a discriminating stress on the name.

"'The ass knoweth his master's crib.'" She pointed to the herring. "It's all ye'll get, Mr.—Ducie, if that's your name."

"Madam,"—I held out the fish at the end of my fork—"you drag it across the track of an apology." I set it back on the dish and replaced the cover. "It is clear that you wish us gone. Well and good: grant Rowley a day for recovery, and to-morrow you shall be quit of us." I reached for my hat.

"Whaur are ye gaun?"

"To seek other lodgings."

"I'll no say—Man, man! have a care! And me beat to close an eye the nicht!" She dropped into a chair. "Nay, Mr. Ducie, ye daurna! Think o' that innocent lamb!"

"That little pig."

"He's ower young to die," sobbed my landlady.

"In the abstract I agree with you: but I am not aware that Rowley's death is required. Say rather that he is ower young to turn King's evidence." I stepped

back from the door. "Mrs. McRankine," I said, "I believe you to be soft-hearted. I know you to be curious. You will be pleased to sit perfectly still and listen to me."

And, resuming my seat, I leaned across the corner of the table and put my case before her without suppression or extenuation. Her breathing tightened over my sketch of the duel with Goguelat; and again more sharply as I told of my descent of the rock. Of Alain she said, "I ken his sort," and of Flora twice, "I'm wonderin' will I have seen her?" For the rest, she heard me out in silence, and rose and walked to the door without a word. There she turned. "It's a verra queer tale. If McRankine had told me the like, I'd have gien him the lie to his face."

Two minutes later I heard the vials of her speech unsealed above stairs, with detonations that shook the house. I had touched off my rocket, and the stick descended—on the prostrate Rowley.

And now I must face the inert hours. I sat down, and read my way through the *Mercury*. "The escaped French soldier, Champdivers, who is wanted in connection with the recent horrid murder at the Castle, remains at large——" the rest but repeated the advertisement of Tuesday. "At large!" I set down the paper, and turned to my landlady's library. It consisted of Derham's *Physico- and Astro-Theology*, *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, by one Taylor, D.D., *The Ready Reckoner or Tradesman's Sure Guide*, and

The Path to the Pit delineated, with Twelve Engravings on Copper-plate. For distraction I fell to pacing the room, and rehearsing those remembered tags of Latin verse concerning which M. de Culemborg had long ago assured me, "My son, we know not when, but some day they will come back to you with solace if not with charm." Good man! My feet trod the carpet to Horace's *Alcaics*. *Virtus recludens immeritis mori Coelum*—h'm, h'm—*raro*—

*raro antecedentem scelestum
deseruit pede Pæna claudo.*

I paused by the window. In this there was no indiscretion; for a cold drizzle washed the panes, and the warmth of the apartment dimmed their inner surface.

"*Pede Pæna claudo*," my finger traced the words on the damp glass.

A sudden clamour of the street-door bell sent me skipping back to the fire-place with my heart in my mouth. Interminable minutes followed, and at length Mrs. McRankine entered with my ball suit from the tailor's. I carried it into the next room, and disposed it on the bed—olive-green coat with gilt buttons and facings of watered silk, olive-green pantaloons, white waistcoat sprigged with blue and green forget-me-nots. The survey carried me on to midday and the midday meal.

The ministry of meal-time is twice blest: for prisoners and men without appetite it punctuates and makes time

of eternity. I dawdled over my chop and pint of brown stout until Mrs. McRankine, after twice entering to clear away, with the face of a Cumæan sibyl, so far relaxed the tension of unnatural calm as to inquire if I meant to be all night about it.

The afternoon wore into dusk; and with dusk she reappeared with a tea-tray. At six I retired to dress.

Behold me now issuing from my chamber, conscious of a well-fitting coat and a shapely pair of legs: the dignified simplicity of my *tournure* (simplicity so proper to the scion of an exiled house) relieved by a dandiacal hint of shirt-frill, and corrected into tenderness by the virgin waistcoat sprigged with forget-me-nots (for constancy), and buttoned with pink coral (for hope). Satisfied of the effect, I sought the apartment of Mr. Rowley of the Rueful Countenance, and found him less yellow, but still contrite, and listening to Mrs. McRankine, who sat with open book by his bedside, and plied him with pertinent dehortations from the Book of Proverbs.

He brightened.

"My heye, Mr. Hann, if that ain't up to the knocker!"

Mrs. McRankine closed the book, and conned me with austerer approval.

"Ye carry it well, I will say."

"It fits, I think."

I turned myself complacently about.

"The drink, I am meaning. I kenned McRankine."

"Shall we talk of business, madam? In the first place, the quittance for our board and lodging."

"I mak' it out on Saturdays."

"Do so; and deduct it out of this." I handed twenty-five of my guineas into her keeping: this left me with five and a crown piece in my pocket. "The balance, while it lasts, will serve for Rowley's keep and current expenses. Before long I hope he may lift the money which lies in the bank at his service, as he knows."

"But you'll come back, Mr. Anne?" cried the lad.

"I'm afraid it's a toss-up, my boy. Discipline, remember!"—for he was preparing to leap out of bed there and then—"You can serve me better in Edinburgh. All you have to do is to wait for a clear coast, and seek and present yourself in private before Mr. T. Robbie of Castle Street, or Miss Flora Gilchrist of Swanston Cottage. From either or both of these you will take your instructions. Here are the addresses."

"If that's a' your need for the lad," said Mrs. McRankine, "he'll be eating his head off: no to say drinking." Rowley winced. "I'll tak' him on mysel'."

"My dear woman——"

"He'll be a brand frae the burnin': and he'll do to clean the knives."

She would hear no denial. I committed the lad to her in this double capacity; and equipped with a pair of goloshes from the wardrobe of the late McRankine, sallied forth upon the rain-swept street.

The card of admission directed me to Buccleuch Place, a little off George Square; and here I found a wet rag of a crowd gathered about a couple of lanterns

and a striped awning. Beneath the awning a panel of light fell on the plashy pavement. Already the guests were arriving. I whipped in briskly, presented my card, and passed up a staircase decorated with flags, evergreens, and national emblems. A venerable flunkey waited for me at the summit. "Cloak lobby to the left, sir." I obeyed, and exchanged my overcoat and goloshes for a circular metal ticket. "What name, sir?" he purred over my card, as I lingered in the vestibule for a moment to scan the ball-room and my field of action: then, having cleared his throat, bawled suddenly, "Mr. Ducie!"

It might have been a stage direction. "*A tucket sounds. Enter the Vicomte, disguised.*" To tell the truth, this entry was a daunting business. A dance had just come to an end; and the musicians in the gallery had fallen to tuning their violins. The chairs arrayed along the walls were thinly occupied, and as yet the social temperature scarce rose to thawing-point. In fact, the second-rate people had arrived, and from the far end of the room were nervously watching the door for notables. Consequently my entrance drew a disquieting fire of observation. The mirrors, reflectors, and girandoles had eyes for me; and as I advanced up the perspective of waxed floor, the very boards winked detection. A little Master of Ceremonies, as round as the rosette on his lapel, detached himself from the nearest group, and approached with something of a skater's motion and an insinuating smile.

"Mr.-a-Ducie, if I heard aright? A stranger, I believe, to our northern capital, and I hope a dancer?" I bowed. "Grant me the pleasure, Mr. Ducie, of finding you a partner."

"If," said I, "you would present me to the young lady yonder, beneath the musician's gallery——" For I recognised Master Ronald's flame, the girl in pink of Mr. Robbie's party, to-night gowned in apple-green.

"Miss McBean—Miss Camilla McBean? With pleasure. Great discrimination you show, sir. Be so good as to follow me."

I was led forward and presented. Miss McBean responded to my bow with great play of shoulders; and in turn presented me to her mother, a moustachioed lady in stiff black silk, surmounted with a black cap and coquelicot trimmings.

"*Any* friend of Mr. Robbie's, I'm sure," murmured Mrs. McBean, affably inclining. "Look, Camilla dear—Sir William and Lady Frazer—in laylock sarsnet—how well that diamond bandeau becomes her! They are early to-night. As I was saying, Mr. ——"

"Ducie."

"*To* be sure. As I was saying, *any* friend of Mr. Robbie—one of my oldest acquaintance. If you can manage now to break him of his bachelor habits? You are making a long stay in Edinburgh?"

"I fear, madam, that I must leave it to-morrow."

"You have seen all our lions, I suppose? The Castle, now? Ah, the attractions of London!—now don't

shake your head, Mr. Ducie. I hope I know a Londoner when I see one. And yet 'twould surprise you how fast we are advancing in Edinburgh. Camilla dear, that Miss Scrymgeour has edged her China crape with the very ribbon trimmings—black satin with pearl edge—we saw in that new shop in Princes Street yesterday: sixpenny width at the bottom, and three-three-farthings round the bodice. Perhaps you can tell me, Mr. Ducie, if it's really true that ribbon trimmings are *the height* in London and Bath this year?"

But the band struck up, and I swept the unresisting Camilla towards the set. After the dance, the ladies (who were kind enough to compliment me on my performance) suffered themselves to be led to the tea-room. By this time the arrivals were following each other thick and fast; and, standing by the tea-table, I heard name after name vociferated at the ball-room door, but never the name my nerves were on the strain to echo. Surely Flora would come: surely none of her guardians, natural or officious, would expect to find me at the ball. But the minutes passed, and I must convey Mrs. and Miss McBean back to their seats beneath the gallery.

"Miss Gilchrist—Miss Flora Gilchrist—Mr. Ronald Gilchrist! Mr. Robbie! Major Arthur Chevenix!"

The first name plumped like a shot across my bows, and brought me up standing—for a second only. Before the catalogue was out, I had dropped the McBeans at their moorings, and was heading down on my enemies' line of battle. Their faces were a picture. Flora's

cheek flushed, and her lips parted in the prettiest cry of wonder. Mr. Robbie took snuff. Ronald went red in the face, and Major Chevenix white. The intrepid Miss Gilchrist turned not a hair.

"What will be the meaning of this?" she demanded, drawing to a stand, and surveying me through her gold-rimmed eye-glass.

"Madam," said I, with a glance at Chevenix, "you may call it a cutting-out expedition."

"Miss Gilchrist," he began, "you will surely not——"

But I was too quick for him.

"Madam, since when has the gallant Major superseded Mr. Robbie as your family adviser?"

"H'mph!" said Miss Gilchrist; which in itself was not reassuring. But she turned to the lawyer.

"My dear lady," he answered her look, "this very imprudent young man seems to have burnt his boats, and no doubt recks very little if, in that heroical conflagration, he burns our fingers. Speaking, however, as your family adviser"—and he laid enough stress on it to convince me that there was no love lost between him and the interloping Chevenix—"I suggest that we gain nothing by protracting this scene in the face of a crowded assembly. Are you for the card-room, madam?"

She took his proffered arm, and they swept from us, leaving Master Ronald red and glum, and the Major pale but nonplussed.

"Four from six leaves two," said I; and promptly.

engaged Flora's arm, and towed her away from the silenced batteries.

"And now, my dear," I added, as we found two isolated chairs, "you will kindly demean yourself as if we were met for the first or second time in our lives. Open your fan—so. Now listen: my cousin, Alain, is in Edinburgh, at Dumbreck's Hotel. No, don't lower it."

She held up the fan, though her small wrist trembled.

"There is worse to come. He has brought Bow Street with him, and likely enough at this moment the runners are ransacking the city hot-foot for my lodgings."

"And you linger and show yourself here!—here of all places! Oh, it is mad! Anne, why will you be so rash?"

"For the simple reason that I have been a fool, my dear. I banked the balance of my money in George Street, and the bank is watched. I must have money to win my way south. Therefore I must find you and reclaim the notes you were kind enough to keep for me. I go to Swanston and find you under surveillance of Chevenix, supported by an animal called Towzer. I may have killed Towzer, by the way. If so, transported to an equal sky, he may shortly have the faithful Chevenix to bear him company. I grow tired of Chevenix."

But the fan dropped: her arms lay limp in her lap; and she was staring up at me piteously, with a world of self-reproach in her beautiful eyes.

"And I locked up the notes at home to-night—when I dressed for the ball—the first time they have left my heart! Oh, false!—false of trust that I am!"

"Why dearest, that is not fatal, I hope. You reach home to-night—you slip them into some hiding—say in the corner of the wall below the garden——"

"Stop: let me think." She picked up her fan again, and behind it her eyes darkened while I watched, and she considered. "You know the hill we pass before we reach Swanston?—it has no name, I believe, but Ronald and I have called it the Fish-back since we were children: it has a clump of firs above it, like a fin. There is a quarry on the east slope. If you will be there at eight—I can manage it, I think, and bring the money."

"But why should you run the risk?"

"Please, Anne—oh, please let me *do* something! If you knew what it is to sit at home while your—your dearest——"

"THE VISCOUNT OF SAINT-YVES!"

The name, shouted from the doorway, rang down her faltering sentence as with the clash of an alarm bell. I saw Ronald—in talk with Miss McBean but a few yards away—spin round on his heel and turn slowly back on me with a face of sheer bewilderment. There was no time to conceal myself. To reach either the tea-room or the card-room, I must traverse twelve feet of open floor. We sat in clear view of the main entrance; and there already, with eyeglass lifted, raffish, flamboyant, exuding

pomades and bad style, stood my detestable cousin. He saw us at once; wheeled right-about-face and spoke to someone in the vestibule; wheeled round again, and bore straight down, a full swagger varnishing his malign triumph. Flora caught her breath as I stood up to accost him.

"Good evening, my cousin! The newspaper told me you were favouring this city with a stay."

"At Dumbreck's Hotel: where, my dear Anne, you have not yet done me the pleasure to seek me out."

"I gathered," said I, "that you were forestalling the compliment. Our meeting, then, is unexpected?"

"Why, no; for, to tell you the truth, the secretary of the Ball Committee, this afternoon, allowed me a glance over his list of *invités*. I am apt to be nice about my company, cousin."

Ass that I was! I had never given this obvious danger so much as a thought.

"I fancy I have seen one of your latest intimates about the street."

He eyed me, and answered, with a bluff laugh, "Ah! You gave us the very devil of a chase. You appear, my dear Anne, to have a hare's propensity for running in your tracks. And begged, I don't wonder at it!" he wound up, ogling Flora with an insolent stare.

Him one might have hunted by scent alone. He reeked of essences.

"Present me, *mon brave*."

"I'll be shot if I do."

"I believe they reserve that privilege for soldiers," he mused.

"At anyrate they don't extend it to——" I pulled up on the word. He had the upper hand, but, I could at least play the game out with decency. "Come," said I, "a *contre-danse* will begin presently. Find yourself a partner, and I promise you shall be our *vis-à-vis*."

"You have blood in you, my cousin."

He bowed, and went in search of the Master of Ceremonies. I gave an arm to Flora. "Well, and how does Alain strike you?" I asked.

"He is a handsome man," she allowed. "If your uncle had treated him differently, I believe——"

"And I believe that no woman alive can distinguish between a gentleman and a dancing-master! A posture or two, and you interpret worth. My dear girl—that fellow!"

She was silent. I have since learnt why. It seems, if you please, that the very same remark had been made to her by that idiot Chevenix, upon me!

We were close to the door: we passed it, and I flung a glance into the vestibule. There, sure enough, at the head of the stairs, was posted my friend of the moleskin waistcoat, in talk with a confederate by some shades uglier than himself, a red-headed, loose-legged scoundrel in cinder-grey.

I was fairly in the trap. I turned, and between the moving crowd caught Alain's eye and his evil smile. He

had found a partner: no less a personage than Lady Frazer of the lilac sarsnet and diamond bandeau.

For some unaccountable reason, in this infernal *impasse* my spirits began to rise, to soar. I declare it: I led Flora forward to the set with a gaiety which may have been unnatural, but was certainly not factitious. A Scotsman would have called me fey. As the song goes—and it matters not if I had it then, or read it later in my wife's library—

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He played a spring and danced it round
Beneath——”

never mind what. The band played the spring and I danced it round, while my cousin eyed me with extorted approval. The quadrille includes an absurd figure—called, I think, *La Pastourelle*. You take a lady with either hand, and jig them to and fro, for all the world like an Englishman of legend parading a couple of wives for sale at Smithfield; while the other male, like a timid purchaser, backs and advances with his arms dangling.

“I’ve lived a life of sturt and strife,
I die by treacherie——”

I challenged Alain with an open smile as he backed before us; and no sooner was the dance over, than I saw him desert Lady Frazer on a hurried excuse, and seek the door to satisfy himself that his men were on guard.

I dropped laughing into a chair beside Flora. "Anne," she whispered; "who is on the stairs?"

"Two Bow Street runners."

If you have seen a dove—a dove caught in a gin! "The back stairs!" she urged.

"They will be watched too. But let us make sure." I crossed to the tea-room, and, encountering a waiter, drew him aside. Was there a man watching the back entrance? He could not tell me. For a guinea would he find out? He went, and returned in less than a minute. Yes, there was a constable below. "It's just a young gentleman to be put to the Law for debt," I explained, recalling the barbarous and, to me, still unmeaning phrase. "I'm no speiring," replied the waiter.

I made my way back, and was not a little disgusted to find my chair occupied by the unconscionable Chevenix.

"My dear Miss Flora, you are unwell!" Indeed, she was pale enough, poor child, and trembling. "Major, she will be swooning in another minute. Get her to the tea-room, quick! while I fetch Miss Gilchrist. She must be taken home."

"It is nothing," she faltered: "it will pass. Pray do not——" As she glanced up, she caught my meaning. "Yes, yes: I will go home."

She took the Major's arm, while I hurried to the card-room. As luck would have it, the old lady was in the act of rising from the green table, having just cut

out from a rubber. Mr. Robbie was her partner; and I saw (and blessed my star for the first time that night) the little heap of silver, which told that she had been winning.

"Miss Gilchrist," I whispered, "Miss Flora is faint: the heat of the room——"

"I've not observed it. The ventilation is considered pairfect."

"She wishes to be taken home."

With fine composure she counted back her money, piece by piece, into a velvet reticule.

"Twelve and sixpence," she proclaimed. "Ye held good cards, Mr. Robbie. Well, Mosha the Viscount, we'll go and see about it."

I led her to the tea-room: Mr. Robbie followed. Flora rested on a sofa in a truly dismal state of collapse, while the Major fussed about her with a cup of tea. "I have sent Ronald for the carriage," he announced.

"H'm," said Miss Gilchrist, eyeing him oddly, "Well, it's your risk. Ye'd best hand me the teacup, and get our shawls from the lobby. You have the tickets. Be ready for us at the top of the stairs."

No sooner was the Major gone than, keeping an eye on her niece, this imperturbable lady stirred the tea and drank it down herself. As she drained the cup—her back for the moment being turned on Mr. Robbie—I was aware of a facial contortion. Was the tea (as children say) going the wrong way?

No: I believe—aid me Apollo and the Nine! I be-

lieve—though I have never dared, and shall never dare to ask—that Miss Gilchrist was doing her best to wink!

On the instant entered Master Ronald with word that the carriage was ready. I slipped to the door and reconnoitred. The crowd was thick in the ball-room; a dance in full swing; my cousin gambolling vivaciously, and, for the moment, with his back to us. Flora leaned on Ronald, and, skirting the wall, our party gained the great door and the vestibule, where Chevenix stood with an armful of cloaks.

"You and Ronald can return and enjoy yourselves," said the old lady, "as soon as ye've packed us off. Ye'll find a hackney coach, no doubt, to bring ye home." Her eye rested on the two runners, who were putting their heads together behind the Major. She turned on me with a stiff courtesy. "Good-night, sir, and I am obliged for your services. Or stay—you may see us to the carriage, if ye'll be so kind. Major, hand Mr. What-d'ye-call some of your wraps."

My eyes did not dare to bless her. We moved down the stairs—Miss Gilchrist leading, Flora supported by her brother and Mr. Robbie, the Major and I behind. As I descended the first step, the red-headed runner made a move forward. Though my gaze was glued upon the pattern of Miss Gilchrist's Paisley shawl, I saw his finger touch my arm! Yes, and I felt it, like a touch of hot iron. The other man—Moleskin—plucked him by the arm: they whispered. They saw

me bare-headed, without my overcoat. They argued, no doubt, that I was unaware; was seeing the ladies to their carriage; would of course return. They let me pass.

Once in the boisterous street, I darted round to the dark side of the carriage. Ronald ran forward to the coachman (whom I recognised for the gardener, Robie). "Miss Flora is faint. Home, as fast as you can!" He skipped back under the awning. "A guinea to make it faster!" I called up from the other side of the box-seat; and out of the darkness and rain I held up the coin and pressed it into Robie's damp palm. "What in the name——!" He peered round, but I was back and close against the step. The door was slammed. "Right away!"

It may have been fancy; but with the shout I seemed to hear the voice of Alain lifted in imprecation on the Assembly Room stairs. As Robie touched up the grey, I whipped open the door on my side and tumbled in—upon Miss Gilchrist's lap.

Flora choked down a cry. I recovered myself, dropped into a heap of rags on the seat facing the ladies, and pulled to the door by its strap.

Dead silence from Miss Gilchrist!

I had to apologise, of course. The wheels rumbled and jolted over the cobbles of Edinburgh; the windows rattled and shook under the uncertain gusts of the city. When we passed a street-lamp it shed no light into the vehicle, but the awful profile of my protectress loomed

out for a second against the yellow haze of the pane, and sank back into impenetrable shade.

"Madam, some explanation—enough at least to mitigate your resentment—natural, I allow."—Jolt, jolt! And still a mortuary silence within the coach! It was disconcerting. Robie for a certainty was driving his best, and already we were beyond the last rare outposts of light on the Lothian Road.

"I believe, madam, the inside of five minutes—if you will allow——"

I stretched out a protesting hand. In the darkness it encountered Flora's. Our fingers closed upon the thrill. For five, ten beatific seconds our pulses sang together, "I love you! I love you!" in the stuffy silence.

"Mosha Saint Yvey!" spoke up a deliberate voice (Flora caught her hand away), "as far as I can make head and tail of your business—supposing it to have a modicum of head, which I doubt—it appears to me that I have just done you a service; and that makes twice."

"A service, madam, I shall ever remember."

"I'll chance that, sir; if ye'll kindly not forget *yourself*."

In resumed silence we must have travelled a mile and a half, or two miles, when Miss Gilchrist let down the sash with a clatter, and thrust her head and mame-lone cap forth into the night.

"Robie!"

Robie pulled up.

“The gentleman will alight.”

It was only wisdom, for we were nearing Swanston. I rose. “Miss Gilchrist, you are a good woman; and I think the cleverest I have met.” “Umph,” replied she. In the act of stepping forth I turned for a final handshake with Flora, and my foot caught in something and dragged it out upon the road. I stooped to pick it up, and heard the door bang by my ear.

“Madam—your shawl!”

But the coach lurched forward; the wheels splashed me; and I was left standing, alone on the inclement highway.

While yet I watched the little red eyes of the vehicle, and almost as they vanished, I heard more rumbling of wheels, and descried two pairs of yellow eyes upon the road, towards Edinburgh. There was just time enough to plunge aside, to leap a fence into a rain-soaked pasture; and there I crouched, the water squishing over my dancing-shoes, while with a flare, a slant of rain, and a glimpse of flogging drivers, two hackney carriages pelted by at a gallop.

CHAPTER XII.

EVENTS OF FRIDAY MORNING: THE CUTTING OF THE
GORDIAN KNOT.

I PULLED out my watch. A fickle ray—the merest filtration of moonlight—glimmered on the dial. Fourteen minutes past one! “Past yin o’clock, and a dark, haary moarnin’.” I recalled the bull voice of the watchman as he had called it on the night of our escape from the Castle—its very tones: and this echo of memory seemed to strike and reverberate the hour closing a long day of fate. Truly, since that night the hands had run full circle, and were back at the old starting-point. I had seen dawn, day: I had basked in the sunshine of men’s respect; I was back in Stygian night—back in the shadow of that infernal Castle—still hunted by the law—with possibly a smaller chance than ever of escape—the cockshy of the elements—with no shelter for my head but a Paisley shawl of violent pattern. It occurred to me that I had travelled much in the interval, and run many risks, to exchange a suit of mustard-yellow for a Paisley shawl and a ball dress that matched neither it nor the climate of the Pentlands. The exhilaration of the ball, the fighting spirit, the last communicated

thrill of Flora's hand, died out of me. In the thickening envelope of sea fog I felt like a squirrel in a rotatory cage. That was a lugubrious hour.

To speak precisely, those were seven lugubrious hours; since Flora would not be due before eight o'clock, if, indeed, I might count on her eluding her double cordon of spies. The question was, whither to turn in the meantime? Certainly not back to the town. In the near neighbourhood I knew of no roof but The Hunter's Tryst, by Alexander Hendry. Suppose that I found it (and the chances in that fog were perhaps against me), would Alexander Hendry, aroused from his bed, be likely to extend his hospitality to a traveller with no more luggage than a Paisley shawl? He might think I had stolen it. I had borne it down the staircase under the eyes of the runners, and the pattern was bitten upon my brain. It was doubtless unique in the district, and familiar: an oriflamme of battle over the barter of dairy produce and malt liquors. Alexander Hendry *must* recognise it, and with an instinct of antagonism. Patently it formed no part of my proper wardrobe: hardly could it be explained as a *gage d'amour*. Eccentric hunters trysted under Hendry's roof; the Six Foot Club, for instance. But a hunter in a frilled shirt and waistcoat sprigged with forget-me-nots! And the house would be watched, perhaps. Every house around would be watched.

The end was that I wore through the remaining hours of darkness upon the sodden hillside. Superlative

Miss Gilchrist! Folded in the mantle of that Spartan dame; huddled upon a boulder, while the rain descended upon my bare head, and coursed down my nose, and filled my shoes, and insinuated a playful trickle down the ridge of my spine; I hugged the lacerating fox of self-reproach, and hugged it again, and set my teeth as it bit upon my vitals. Once, indeed, I lifted an accusing arm to heaven. It was as if I had pulled the string of a douche-bath. Heaven flooded the fool with gratuitous tears; and the fool sat in the puddle of them and knew his folly. But heaven at the same time mercifully veiled that figure of abasement; and I will lift but a corner of the sheet.

Wind in hidden gullies, and the talk of lapsing waters on the hillside, filled all the spaces of the night. The highroad lay at my feet, fifty yards or so below my boulder. Soon after two o'clock (as I made it) lamps appeared in the direction of Swanston, and drew nearer; and two hackney coaches passed me at a jog-trot, towards the opaline haze into which the weather had subdued the lights of Edinburgh. I heard one of the drivers curse as he went by, and inferred that my open-handed cousin had shirked the weather and gone comfortably from the Assembly Rooms to Dumbreck's Hotel and bed, leaving the chase to his mercenaries.

After this you are to believe that I dozed and woke by snatches. I watched the moon descend in her foggy circle; but I saw also the mulberry face and minatory forefinger of Mr. Romaine, and caught myself explaining to

him and Mr. Robbie that their joint proposal to mortgage my inheritance for a flying broomstick took no account of the working-model of the whole Rock and Castle of Edinburgh, which I dragged about by an ankle chain. Anon I was pelting with Rowley in a claret-coloured chaise through a cloud of robin-redbreasts; and with that I awoke to the veritable chatter of birds and the white light of dawn upon the hills.

The truth is, I had come very near to the end of my endurance. Cold and rain together, supervening in that hour of the spirit's default, may well have made me light-headed; nor was it easy to distinguish the tooth of self-reproach from that of genuine hunger. Stiff, qualmish, vacant of body, heart and brain, I left my penitential boulder and crawled down to the road. Glancing along it for sight or warning of the runners, I spied, at two gunshots' distance or less, a milestone with a splash of white upon it—a draggled placard. Abhorrent thought! Did it announce the price upon the head of Champdivers? "At least I will see how they describe him"—this I told myself; but that which tugged at my feet was the baser fascination of fright. I had thought my spine inured by the night's experiences to anything in the way of cold shivers. I discovered my mistake while approaching that scrap of paper.

"AERIAL ASCENSION EXTRAORDINARY!!!**IN****THE MONSTRE BALLOON****'LUNARDI'**

**PROFESSOR BYFIELD (BY DIPLOMA), THE WORLD-RENOWNED
EXPONENT OF AEROSTATICS AND AERONAUTICS,
Has the honour to inform the Nobility and Gentry
of Edinburgh and the neighbourhood ——"**

The shock of it—the sudden descent upon sublimity, according to Byfield—took me in the face. I put up my hands. I broke into elfish laughter, and ended with a sob. Sobs and laughter together shook my fast-ing body like a leaf; and I zigzagged across the fields, buffeted this side and that by a mirth as uncontrollable as it was idiotic. Once I pulled up in the middle of a spasm to marvel irresponsibly at the sound of my own voice. You may wonder that I had will and wit to be drifted towards Flora's trysting place. But in truth there was no missing it—the low chine looming through the weather, the line of firs topping it, and, towards the west, diminishing like a fish's dorsal fin. I had conned it often enough from the other side; had looked right across it on the day when she stood beside me on the bastion and pointed out the smoke of Swanston Cottage. Only on this side the fish-tail (so to speak) had a nick in it; and through that nick ran the path to the old quarry.

I reached it a little before eight. The quarry lay to

the left of the path, which passed on and out upon the hill's northern slope. Upon that slope there was no need to show myself. I measured out some fifty yards of the path, and paced it to and fro, idly counting my steps; for the chill crept back into my bones if I halted for a minute. Once or twice I turned aside into the quarry, and stood there tracing the veins in the hewn rock: then back to my quarterdeck tramp and the study of my watch. Ten minutes past eight! Fool—to expect her to cheat so many spies. This hunger of mine was becoming serious. . . .

A stone dislodged—a light footfall on the path—and my heart leapt. It was she! She came, and earth flowered again, as beneath the feet of the goddess, her namesake. I declare it for a fact that from the moment of her coming the weather began to mend.

“Flora!”

“My poor Anne!”

“The shawl has been useful,” said I.

“You are starving.”

“That is unpleasantly near the truth.”

“I knew it. See, dear.” A shawl of hodden grey covered her head and shoulders, and from beneath it she produced a small basket and held it up. “The scones will be hot yet, for they went straight from the hearth into the napkin.”

She led the way to the quarry. I praised her forethought; having in those days still to learn that woman's

first instinct, when a man is dear to her and in trouble, is to feed him.

We spread the napkin on a big stone of the quarry, and set out the feast: scones, oat-cake, hard-boiled eggs, a bottle of milk, and a small flask of usquebaugh. Our hands met as we prepared the table. This was our first housekeeping; the first breakfast of our honeymoon I called it, rallying her. "Starving I may be; but starve I will in sight of food, unless you share it," and, "It escapes me for the moment, madam, if you take sugar." We leaned to each other across the rock, and our faces touched. Her cold cheek with the rain upon it, and one small damp curl—for many days I had to feed upon the memory of that kiss, and I feed upon it yet.

"But it beats me how you escaped them," said I.

She laid down the bannock she had been making pretence to nibble. "Janet—that is our dairy girl—lent me her frock and shawl: her shoes too. She goes out to the milking at six, and I took her place. The fog helped me. They are hateful."

"They are, my dear. Chevenix——"

"I mean these clothes. And I am thinking, too, of the poor cows."

"The instinct of animals——" I lifted my glass. "Let us trust it to find means to attract the notice of two paid detectives and two volunteers."

"I had rather count on Aunt," said Flora, with one of her rare and adorable smiles, which fled as it came. "But, Anne, we must not waste time. They

are so many 'against you, and so near. Oh, be serious!"

"Now you are talking like Mr. Romaine."

"For my sake, dear!" She clasped her hands. I took them in mine across the table, and, unclasping them, kissed the palms.

"Sweetheart," I said, "before this weather clears——"

"It is clearing."

"We will give it time. Before this weather clears, I must be across the valley and fetching a circuit for the drovers' road, if you can teach me when to hit it."

She withdrew one of her hands. It went up to the throat of her bodice, and came forth with my packet of notes.

"Good Lord!" said I: "if I hadn't forgotten the money!"

"I think nothing teaches you," sighed she.

She had sewn them tightly in a little bag of yellow oiled silk; and as I held it, warm from her young bosom, and turned it over in my hand, I saw that it was embroidered in scarlet thread with the one word "Anne" beneath the Lion Rampant of Scotland, in imitation of the poor toy I had carved for her—it seemed, so long ago!

"I wear the original," she murmured.

I crushed the parcel into my breast-pocket, and, taking both hands again, fell on my knees before her on the stones.

"Flora—my angel! my heart's bride!"

"Hush!" She sprang away. Heavy footsteps were coming up the path. I had just time enough to fling Miss Gilchrist's shawl over my head and resume my seat, when a couple of buxom country wives bustled past the mouth of the quarry. They saw us, beyond a doubt: indeed, they stared hard at us, and muttered some comment as they went by, and left us gazing at each other.

"They took us for a picnic," I whispered.

"The queer thing," said Flora, "is that they were not surprised. The sight of you——"

"Seen sideways in this shawl, and with my legs hidden by the stone here, I might pass for an elderly female junketer."

"This is scarcely the hour for a picnic," answered my wise girl, "and decidedly not the weather."

The sound of another footstep prevented my reply. This time the wayfarer was an old farmer-looking fellow in a shepherd's plaid and bonnet powdered with mist. He halted before us and nodded, leaning rheumatically on his staff.

"A coarse moarnin'. Ye'll be from Leadburn, I'm thinkin'?"

"Put it at Peebles," said I, making shift to pull the shawl close about my damning finery.

"Peebles!" he said reflectively. "I've ne'er ventured so far as Peebles. I've contemplated it! But I was none sure whether I would like it when I got there. See

here: I recommend ye no to be lazin' ower the meat, gin ye'd drap in for the fun. A'm full late, mysel'!"

He passed on. What could it mean? We hearkened after his tread. Before it died away, I sprang and caught Flora by the hand.

"Listen! Heavens above us, what is *that*?"

"It sounds to me like Gow's version of *The Caledonian Hunt's Delight*, on a brass band."

Jealous powers! Had Olympus conspired to ridicule our love, that we must exchange our parting vows to the public strains of *The Caledonian Hunt's Delight*, in Gow's version and a semitone flat? For three seconds Flora and I (in the words of a later British bard) looked at each other with a wild surmise, silent. Then she darted to the path, and gazed along it down the hill.

"We must run, Anne. There are more coming!"

We left the scattered relics of breakfast, and, taking hands, scurried along the path northwards. A few yards, and with a sharp turn it led us out of the cutting and upon the hillside. And here we pulled up together with a gasp.

Right beneath us lay a green meadow, dotted with a crowd of two or three hundred people; and over the nucleus of this gathering, where it condensed into a black swarm, as of bees, there floated, not only the dispiriting music of *The Caledonian Hunt's Delight*, but an object of size and shape suggesting the Genie escaped from the Fisherman's Bottle, as described in M. Galland's ingenious *Thousand and One Nights*. It was Byfield's

balloon—the monster *Lunardi*—in process of inflation.

“Confound Byfield!” I ejaculated in my haste.

“Who is Byfield?”

“An aeronaut, my dear, of bilious humour; which no doubt accounts for his owning a balloon striped alternately with liver-colour and pale blue, and for his arranging it and a brass band in the very line of my escape. That man dogs me like fate.” I broke off sharply. “And after all, why not?” I mused.

The next instant I swung round, as Flora uttered a piteous little cry; and there, behind us, in the outlet of the cutting, stood Major Chevenix and Ronald.

The boy stepped forward, and, ignoring my bow, laid a hand on Flora’s arm.

“You will come home at once.”

I touched his shoulder. “Surely not,” I said, “seeing that the spectacle apparently wants but ten minutes of its climax.”

He swung on me in a passion. “For God’s sake, St. Yves, don’t force a quarrel now, of all moments! Man, haven’t you compromised my sister enough?”

“It seems to me that, having set a watch on your sister at the suggestion, and with the help of a casual Major of Foot, you might in decency reserve the word ‘compromise’ for home consumption; and further, that against adversaries so poorly sensitive to her feelings, your sister may be pardoned for putting her resentment into action.”

"Major Chevenix is a friend of the family." But the lad blushed as he said it.

"The family?" I echoed. "So? Pray did your aunt invite his help? No, no, my dear Ronald; you cannot answer that. And while you play the game of insult to your sister, sir, I will see that you eat the discredit of it."

"Excuse me," interposed the Major, stepping forward. "As Ronald said, this is not the moment for quarrelling; and, as you observed, sir, the climax is not so far off. The runner and his men are even now coming round the hill. We saw them mounting the slope, and (I may add) your cousin's carriage drawn up on the road below. The fact is, Miss Gilchrist has been traced to the hill; and as it secretly occurred to us that the quarry might be her objective, we arranged to take the ascent on this side. See there!" he cried, and flung out a hand.

I looked up. Sure enough, at that instant, a grey-coated figure appeared on the summit of the hill, not five hundred yards away to the left. He was followed closely by my friend of the moleskin waistcoat; and the pair came sidling down the slope towards us.

"Gentlemen," said I, "it appears that I owe you my thanks. Your stratagem in any case was kindly meant."

"There was Miss Gilchrist to consider," said the Major stiffly. But Ronald cried, "Quick, St. Ives! Make

a dash back by the quarry path. I warrant we don't hinder."

"Thank you, my friend: I have another notion. Flora," I said, and took her hand, "here is our parting. The next five minutes will decide much. Be brave, dearest; and your thoughts go with me till I come again."

"Wherever you go, I'll think of you. Whatever happens, I'll love you. Go, and God defend you, Anne!" Her breast heaved, as she faced the Major, red and shamefast indeed, but gloriously defiant.

"Quick!" cried she and her brother together. I kissed her hand and sprang down the hill.

I heard a shout behind me; and, glancing back, saw my pursuers—three now, with my full-bodied cousin for whipper-in—change their course as I leapt a brook and headed for the crowded inclosure. A somnolent fat man, bulging, like a feather-bed, on a three-legged stool, dozed at the receipt of custom, with a deal table and a bowl of sixpences before him. I dashed on him with a crown-piece.

"No change given," he objected, waking up and fumbling with a bundle of pink tickets.

"None required." I snatched the ticket and ran through the gateway.

I gave myself time for another look before mingling with the crowd. The moleskin waistcoat was leading now, and had reached the brook; with red-head a yard or two behind, and my cousin a very bad third, panting

—it pleased me to imagine how sorely—across the lower slopes to the eastward. The janitor leaned against his toll-bar and still followed me with a stare. Doubtless by my uncovered head and gala dress he judged me an all-night reveller—a strayed Bacchanal fooling in the morrow's eye.

Prompt upon the inference came inspiration. I must win to the centre of the crowd, and a crowd is invariably indulgent to a drunkard. I hung out the glaring signboard of crapulous glee. Lurching, hiccoughing, jostling, apologising to all and sundry with spacious incoherence, I plunged my way through the sightseers, and they gave me passage with all the good-humour in life.

I believe that I descended upon that crowd as a godsend, a dancing rivulet of laughter. They needed entertainment. A damper, less enthusiastic company never gathered to a public show. Though the rain had ceased, and the sun shone, those who possessed umbrellas were not to be coaxed, but held them aloft with a settled air of gloom which defied the lenitives of nature and the spasmodic cajolery of the worst band in Edinburgh. "It'll be near full, Jock?" "It wull." "He'll be startin' in a meenit?" "Aiblins he wull." "Wull this be the sixt time ye've seen him?" "I shudna wonder." It occurred to me that, had we come to bury Byfield, not to praise him, we might have displayed a blither interest.

Byfield himself, bending from the car beneath his

gently swaying canopy of liver-colour and pale blue, directed the proceedings with a mien of saturnine pre-occupation. He may have been calculating the receipts. As I squeezed to the front, his underlings were shifting the pipe which conveyed the hydrogen gas, and the *Lunardi* strained gently at its ropes. Somebody with a playful thrust sent me staggering into the clear space beneath.

And here a voice hailed and fetched me up with a round turn.

"Ducie, by all that's friendly! Playmate of my youth and prop of my declining years, how goes it?"

It was the egregious Dalmahoy. He clung and steadied himself by one of the dozen ropes binding the car to earth; and with an air of doing it all by his unaided cleverness—an air so indescribably, so majestically drunken, that I could have blushed for the poor expedients which had carried me through the throng.

"You'll excuse me if I don't let go. Fact is, we've been keeping it up a bit all night. Byfield leaves us—to expatiate in realms untrodden by the foot of man—

"The feathered tribes on pinions cleave the air;
Not so the mackerel, and, still less, the bear."

But Byfield does it—Byfield in his *Monster Foolardi*. One stroke of this knife (always supposing I miss my own hand), and the rope is severed: our common friend scales the empyrean. But he'll come back—oh, never

doubt he'll come back!—and begin the dam business over again. Tha's the law 'gravity 'cording to Byfield."

Mr. Dalmahoy concluded inconsequently with a vocal imitation of a post-horn; and, looking up, I saw the head and shoulders of Byfield projected over the rim of the car.

He drew the natural inference from my dress and demeanour, and groaned aloud.

"Oh, go away—get out of it, Ducie! Isn't one natural born ass enough for me to deal with? You fellows are guying the whole show!"

"Byfield!" I called up eagerly, "I'm not drunk. Reach me down a ladder, quick! A hundred guineas if you'll take me with you!" I saw over the crowd, not ten deep behind me, the red head of the man in grey.

"That proves it," said Byfield. "Go away; or at least keep quiet. I'm going to make a speech." He cleared his throat. "Ladies and gentlemen——"

I held up my packet of notes, "Here's the money,—for pity's sake, man! There are bailiffs after me, in the crowd!"

"—the spectacle which you have honoured with your enlightened patronage—I tell you I can't." He cast a glance behind him into the car—"with your enlightened patronage, needs but few words of introduction or commendation."

"Hear, hear!" from Dalmahoy.

"Your attendance proves the sincerity of your interest——"

I spread out the notes under his eyes. He blinked, but resolutely lifted his voice.

“The spectacle of a solitary voyager—”

“Two hundred!” I called up.

“The spectacle of two hundred solitary voyagers—cradled in the brain of a Montgolfier and a Charles—Oh, stop it! I’m no public speaker! How the deuce——?”

There was a lurch and a heave in the crowd. “Pitch out the drunken loon!” cried a voice. The next moment I heard my cousin bawling for a clear passage. With the tail of my eye I caught a glimpse of his plethoric perspiring face as he came charging past the barrels of the hydrogen-apparatus; and, with that, Byfield had shaken down a rope-ladder and fixed it, and I was scrambling up like a cat.

“Cut the ropes!”

“Stop him!” my cousin bawled. “Stop the balloon! It’s Champdivers, the murderer!”

“Cut the ropes!” vociferated Byfield; and to my infinite relief I saw that Dalmahoy was doing his best. A hand clutched at my heel. I let out viciously, amid a roar of the crowd; felt the kick reach and rattle home on somebody’s teeth; and, as the crowd made a rush and the balloon swayed and shot upwards, heaved myself over the rim into the car.

Recovering myself on the instant, I bent over. I had on my tongue a neat farewell for Alain, but the sight of a hundred upturned and contorted faces silenced me as a blow might. There had lain my real peril, in

the sudden wild-beast rage now suddenly baffled. I read it, as clear as print, and sickened. Nor was Alain in a posture to listen. My kick had sent Moleskin flying on top of him; and borne to earth, prone beneath the superincumbent bulk of his retainer, he lay with hands outspread like a swimmer's and nose buried in the plashy soil.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE INCOMPLETE AERONAUTS.

ALL this I took in at a glance: I dare say in three seconds or less. The hubbub beneath us dropped to a low, rumbling bass. Suddenly a woman's scream divided it—one high-pitched, penetrating scream, followed by silence. And then, as a pack of hounds will start into cry, voice after voice caught up the scream and reduplicated it until the whole enclosure rang with alarm.

"Hullo!" Byfield called to me: "what the deuce is happening now?" and ran to his side of the car. "Good Lord, it's Dalmahoy!"

It was. Beneath us, at the tail of a depending rope, that unhappy lunatic dangled between earth and sky. He had been the first to cut the tether; and, having severed it below his grasp, had held on while the others cut loose, taking even the asinine precaution to loop the end twice round his wrist. Of course the upward surge of the balloon had heaved him off his feet, and his muddled instinct did the rest. Clutching now with both hands, he was borne aloft like a lamb from the flock.

So we reasoned afterwards. "The grapnel!" gasped Byfield: for Dalmahoy's rope was fastened beneath the

floor of the car, and not to be reached by us. We fumbled to cast the grapnel loose, and shouted down together—

“For God’s sake hold on! Catch the anchor when it comes! You’ll break your neck if you drop!”

He swung into sight again beyond the edge of the floor, and uplifted a strained, white face.

We cast loose the grapnel, lowered it and jerked it towards him. He swung past it like a pendulum, caught at it with one hand, and missed: came flying back on the receding curve and missed again. At the third attempt he blundered right against it, and flung an arm over one of the flukes, next a leg, and in a trice we were hauling up, hand over hand.

We dragged him inboard. He was pale, but undefeatedly voluble.

“Must apologise to you fellows, really. Dam silly, clumsy kind of thing to do; might have been awkward too. Thank you, Byfield, my boy, I will: two fingers only—a harmless steadier.”

He took the flask and was lifting it. But his jaw dropped and his hand hung arrested.

“He’s going to faint,” I cried. “The strain——”

“Strain on your grandmother, Ducie! What’s *that*?”

He was staring past my shoulder, and on the instant I was aware of a voice—not the aeronaut’s—speaking behind me, and, as it were, out of the clouds,—

“I tak’ ye to witness, Mister Byfield——”

Consider, if you please. For six days I had been

oscillating within a pretty complete circumference of alarms. It is small blame to me, I hope, that with my nerve on so nice a pivot, I quivered and swung to this new apprehension like a needle in a compass-box.

On the floor of the car, at my feet, lay a heap of plaid rugs and overcoats, from which, successively and painfully disinvolved, there emerged first a hand clutching a rusty beaver hat, next a mildly indignant face, in spectacles, and finally the rearward of a very small man in a seedy suit of black. He rose on his knees, his finger-tips resting on the floor, and contemplated the aeronaut over his glasses with a world of reproach.

"I tak' ye to witness, Mr. Byfield!"

Byfield mopped a perspiring brow.

"My dear sir," he stammered, "all a mistake—no fault of mine—explain presently;" then, as one catching at an inspiration, "Allow me to introduce you. Mr. Dalmahoy, Mr.——"

"My name is Sheepshanks," said the little man stiffly. "But you'll excuse me——"

Mr. Dalmahoy interrupted with a playful cat-call.

"Hear, hear! *Silence!* 'His name is Sheepshanks. On the Grampian Hills his father kept his flocks—a thousand sheep,' and, I make no doubt, shanks in proportion. Excuse you, Sheepshanks? My *dear* sir! At this altitude one shank was more than we had a right to expect: the plural multiplies the obligation." Keeping a tight hold on his hysteria, Dalmahoy steadied himself by a rope and bowed.

"And I, sir"—as Mr. Sheepshanks' thoroughly bewildered gaze travelled around and met mine—"I, sir, am the Vicomte Anne de Kéroual de St. Yves, at your service. I haven't a notion how or why you come to be here: but you seem likely to be an acquisition. On my part," I continued, as there leapt into my mind the stanza I had vainly tried to recover in Mrs. McRankine's sitting-room, "I have the honour to refer you to the inimitable Roman, Flaccus—

'Virtus, recludens immeritis mori
Coelum negata temptat iter via,
Coetusque vulgares et udam
Spernit humum fugiente penna.'

—you have the Latin, sir?"

"Not a word." He subsided upon the pile of rugs and spread out his hands in protest. "I tak' ye to witness, Mr. Byfield!"

"Then in a minute or so I will do myself the pleasure of construing," said I, and turned to scan the earth we were leaving—I had not guessed how rapidly.

We contemplated it from the height of six hundred feet—or so Byfield asserted after consulting his barometer. He added that this was a mere nothing: the wonder was the balloon had risen at all with one-half of the total folly of Edinburgh clinging to the car. I passed the possible inaccuracy and certain ill-temper of this calculation. He had (he explained) made jettison of at least a hundredweight of sand ballast. I could only hope it had fallen on my cousin. To me, six hun-

dred feet appeared a very respectable eminence. And the view was ravishing.

The *Lunardi* mounting through a stagnant calm in a line almost vertical, had pierced the morning mists, and now swam emancipated in a heaven of exquisite blue. Below us, by some trick of eyesight, the country had grown concave, its horizons curving up like the rim of a shallow bowl—a bowl heaped, in point of fact, with sea-fog, but to our eyes with a froth delicate and dazzling as a whipped syllabub of snow. Upon it the travelling shadow of the balloon became no shadow but a stain: an amethyst (you might call it) purged of all grosser properties than colour and lucency. At times thrilled by no perceptible wind, rather by the pulse of the sun's rays, the froth shook and parted: and then behold, deep in the *crevasses*, vignetted and shining, an acre or two of the earth of man's business and fret—tilled slopes of the Lothians, ships dotted on the Forth, the capital like a hive that some child had smoked—the ear of fancy could almost hear it buzzing.

I snatched the glass from Byfield, and brought it to focus upon one of these peepshow rifts: and lo! at the foot of the shaft, imaged, as it were, far down in a luminous well, a green hillside and three figures standing. A white speck fluttered; and fluttered until the rift closed again. Flora's handkerchief! Blessings on the brave hand that waved it!—at a moment when (as I have since heard and knew without need of hearing) her heart was down in her shoes, or, to speak accurately,

in the milkmaid Janet's. Singular in many things, she was at one with the rest of her sex in its native and incurable distrust of man's inventions.

I am bound to say that my own faith in aërostatics was a plant—a sensitive plant—of extremely tender growth. Either I failed, a while back, in painting the emotions of my descent of the *Devil's Elbow*, or the reader knows that I am a chicken-hearted fellow about a height. I make him a present of the admission. Set me on a plane superficies, and I will jog with all the *insouciance* of a rolling stone: toss me in air, and, with the stone in the child's adage, I am in the hands of the devil. Even to the qualified instability of a sea-going ship I have ever committed myself with resignation rather than confidence.

But to my unspeakable relief the *Lunardi* floated upwards, and continued to float, almost without a tremor. Only by reading the barometer, or by casting scraps of paper overboard, could we tell that the machine moved at all. Now and again we revolved slowly: so Byfield's compass informed us, but for ourselves we had never guessed it. Of dizziness I felt no longer a symptom, for the sufficient reason that the provocatives were nowhere at hand. We were the only point in space, without possibility of comparison with another. We were made one with the clean silences receiving us; and speaking only for the Vicomte Anne de St. Yves, I dare assert that for five minutes a newly bathed infant had not been less conscious of original sin.

"But look here, you know"—it was Byfield at my elbow—"I'm a public character, by George; and this puts me in a devilish awkward position."

"So it does," I agreed. "You proclaimed yourself a solitary voyager: and here, to the naked eye are four of us."

"And pray how can I help that? If, at the last moment, a couple of lunatics come rushing in——"

"They still leave Sheepshanks to be accounted for." Byfield began to irritate me. I turned to the stowaway. "Perhaps," said I, "Mr. Sheepshanks will explain."

"I paid in advance," Mr. Sheepshanks began, eager to seize the opening presented. "The fact is, I'm a married man."

"Already at two points you have the advantage of us. Proceed, sir."

"You were good enough, just now, to give me your name, Mr. ——"

"The Vicomte Anne de Kéroual de St. Yves."

"It is a somewhat difficult name to remember."

"If that be all, sir, within two minutes you shall have a *memoria technica* prepared for use during the voyage."

Mr. Sheepshanks harked back. "I am a married man, and—d'ye see?—Mrs. Sheepshanks, as you might say, has no sympathy with ballooning. She was a Guthrie of Dumfries."

"Which accounts for it, to be sure," said I.

"To me, sir, on the contrary, aërostatics have long

been an alluring study. I might even, Mr. ———, I might even, I say, term it the passion of my life." His mild eyes shone behind their glasses. "I remember Vincent Lunardi, sir. I was present in Heriot's Gardens when he made an ascension there in October '85. He came down at Cupar. The Society of Gentlemen Golfers at Cupar presented him with an address; and at Edinburgh he was admitted Knight Companion of the Beggar's Benison, a social company, or (as I may say) crew, since defunct. A thin-faced man, sir. He wore a peculiar bonnet, if I may use the expression, very much cocked up behind. The shape became fashionable. He once pawned his watch with me, sir; that being my profession. I regret to say he redeemed it subsequently: otherwise I might have the pleasure of showing it to you. Oh, yes, the theory of ballooning has long been a passion with me. But in deference to Mrs. Sheepshanks I have abstained from the actual practice—until to-day. To tell you the truth, my wife believes me to be brushing off the cobwebs in the Kyles of Bute."

"*Are there any cobwebs in the Kyles of Bute?*" asked Dalmahoy, in a tone unnaturally calm.

"A figure of speech, sir—as one might say, holiday-keeping there. I paid Mr. Byfield five pounds in advance. I have his receipt. And the stipulation was that I should be concealed in the car and make the ascension with him alone."

"Are we then to take it, sir, that our company offends you?" I demanded.

He made haste to disclaim. "Not at all: decidedly not in the least. But the chances were for less agreeable associates." I bowed. "And a bargain's a bargain," he wound up.

"So it is," said I. "Byfield, hand Mr. Sheepshanks back his five pounds."

"Oh, come now!" the aeronaut objected. "And who may you be, to be ordering a man about?"

"I believe I have already answered that question twice in your hearing."

"Mosha the Viscount Thingamy de Something-or-other? I dare say!"

"Have you any objection?"

"Not the smallest. For all I care, you are Robert Burns, or Napoleon Buonaparte, or anything, from the Mother of the Gracchi to Balaam's Ass. But I knew you first as Mr. Ducie; and you may take it that I'm Mr. Don't see." He reached up a hand towards the valve-string.

"What are you proposing to do?"

"To descend."

"What?—back to the enclosure?"

"Scarcely that, seeing that we have struck a northerly current, and are travelling at the rate of thirty miles an hour, perhaps. That's Broad Law to the south of us, as I make it out."

"But why descend at all?"

"Because it sticks in my head that someone in the crowd called you by a name that wasn't Ducie; and by a title, for that matter, which didn't sound like 'Viscount.' I took it at the time for a constable's trick; but I begin to have my strong doubts."

The fellow was dangerous. I stooped nonchalantly, on pretence of picking up a plaid; for the air had turned bitterly cold, of a sudden.

"Mr. Byfield, a word in your private ear, if you will."

"As you please," said he, dropping the valve-string.

We leaned together over the breastwork of the car. "If I mistake not," I said, speaking low, "the name was Champdivers."

He nodded.

"The gentleman who raised that foolish but infernally risky cry was my own cousin, the Viscount de St. Yves. I give you my word of honour to that." Observing that this staggered him, I added, mightily slyly, "I suppose it doesn't occur to you now that the whole affair was a game, for a friendly wager?"

"No," he answered brutally, "it doesn't. And what's more, it won't go down."

"In that respect," said I, with a sudden change of key, "it resembles your balloon. But I admire the obstinacy of your suspicions; since, as a matter of fact, I am Champdivers."

"The mur——"

"Certainly not. I killed the man in fair duel."

"Hal" he eyed me with sour distrust. "That is what you have to prove."

"Man alive, you don't expect me to demonstrate it up here, by the simple apparatus of ballooning!"

"There is no talk of 'up here,'" said he, and reached for the valve-string.

"Say 'down there,' then. Down there it is no business of the accused to prove his innocence. By what I have heard of the law, English or Scotch, the boot is on the other leg. But I'll tell you what I *can* prove. I can prove, sir, that I have been a deal in your company of late; that I supped with you and Mr. Dalmahoy no longer ago than Wednesday. You may put it that we three are here together again by accident; that you never suspected me; that my invasion of your machine was a complete surprise to you, and, so far as you were concerned, wholly fortuitous. But ask yourself what any intelligent jury is likely to make of that cock-and-bull story." Mr. Byfield was visibly shaken. "Add to this," I proceeded, "that you have to explain Sheepshanks; to confess that you gulled the public by advertising a lonely ascension, and haranguing a befooled multitude to the same intent, when, all the time, you had a companion concealed in the car. 'A public character' you call yourself! My word, sir! there'll be no mistake about it, this time."

I paused, took breath, and shook a finger at him:—

"Now just you listen to me, Mr. Byfield. Pull that string, and a sadly discredited aeronaut descends upon

the least charitable of worlds. Why sir, in any case your game in Edinburgh is up. The public is dog-tired of you and your ascensions, as any observant child in to-day's crowd could have told you. The truth was there staring you in the face; and next time even your purblind vanity must recognise it. Consider; I offered you two hundred guineas for the convenience of your balloon. I now double that offer on condition that I become its owner during this trip, and that you manipulate it as I wish. Here are the notes; and out of the total you will refund five pounds to Mr. Sheepshanks."

Byfield's complexion had grown streaky as his balloon; and with colours not so very dissimilar. I had stabbed upon his vital self-conceit, and the man was really hurt.

"You must give me time," he stammered.

"By all means." I knew he was beaten. But only the poorness of my case excused me, and I had no affection for the weapons used. I turned with relief to the others. Dalmahoy was seated on the floor of the car, and helping Mr. Sheepshanks to unpack a carpet bag.

"This will be whisky," the little pawnbroker announced: "three bottles. My wife said, 'Surely, Elshander, ye'll find whisky where ye're gaun.' 'No doubt I will,' said I, 'but I'm not very confident of its quality; and it's a far step.' My itinerary, Mr. Dalmahoy, was planned from Greenock to the Kyles of Bute and back, and thence coastwise to Saltcoats and the land of Burns. I

told her, if she had anything to communicate, to address her letter to the care of the postmaster, Ayr,—ha, ha!" He broke off and gazed reproachfully into Dalmahoy's impassive face. "Ayr—air," he explained: "a little play upon words."

"Skye would have been better," suggested Dalmahoy, without moving an eyelid.

"Skye? Dear me—capital, capital! Only you see," he urged, "she wouldn't expect me to be in Skye."

A minute later he drew me aside. "Excellent company your friend is, sir: most gentlemanly manners; but at times, if I may so say, not very gleg."

My hands by this time were numb with cold. We had been ascending steadily, and Byfield's English thermometer stood at thirteen degrees. I borrowed from the heap a thicker overcoat, in the pocket of which I was lucky enough to find a pair of furred gloves; and leaned over for another look below, still with a corner of my eye for the aeronaut, who stood biting his nails, as far from me as the car allowed.

The sea-fog had vanished, and the south of Scotland lay spread beneath us from sea to sea, like a map in monotint. Nay, yonder was England, with the Solway cleaving the coast—a broad, bright spearhead, slightly bent at the tip—and the fells of Cumberland beyond, mere hummocks on the horizon; all else flat as a board or as the bottom of a saucer. White threads of high-road connected town to town: the intervening hills had fallen down, and the towns, as if in fright, had shrunk

into themselves, contracting their suburbs as a snail his horns. The old poet was right who said that the Olympians had a delicate view. The lace-makers of Valenciennes might have had the tracing of those towns and highroads; those knots of *guipure* and ligatures of finest *réseau-work*. And when I considered that what I looked down on—this, with its arteries and nodules of public traffic—was a nation; that each silent nodule held some thousands of men, each man moderately ready to die in defence of his shopboard and hen-roost; it came into my mind that my Emperor's emblem was the bee, and this Britain the spider's web, sure enough.

Byfield came across and stood at my elbow.

"Mr. Ducie, I have considered your offer, and accept it. It's a curst position——"

"For a public character," I put in affably.

"Don't, sir! I beg that you don't. Your words just now made me suffer a good deal: the more, that I perceive a part of them to be true. An aeronaut, sir, has ambition—how can he help it? The public, the newspapers, feed it for awhile; they *fêta*, and flatter, and applaud him. But in its heart the public ranks him with the mountebank, and reserves the right to drop him when tired of his tricks. Is it wonderful that he forgets this sometimes? For in his own thoughts he is not a mountebank—no, by God, he is not!"

The man spoke with genuine passion. I held out my hand.

"Mr. Byfield, my words were brutal. I beg you will allow me to take them back."

He shook his head. "They were true, sir; partly true, that is."

"I am not so sure. A balloon, as you hint and I begin to discover, may alter the perspective of man's ambitions. Here are the notes; and on the top of them I give you my word that you are not abetting a criminal. How long should the *Lunardi* be able to maintain itself in the air?"

"I have never tried it; but I calculate on twenty hours—say twenty-four at a pinch."

"We will test it. The current, I see, is still north-east, or from that to north-by-east. And our height?"

He consulted the barometer. "Something under three miles."

Dalmahoy heard, and whooped. "Hi! you fellows, come to lunch! Sandwiches, shortbread, and cleanest Glenlivet—Elshander's Feast:—

'Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown;
He raised a mortal to the skies——'

Sheepshanks provided the whiskey. Rise, Elshander: observe that you have no worlds left to conquer, and having shed the perfunctory tear, pass the corkscrew. Come along, Ducie: come, my Dædalian boy; if you are not hungry, I am, and so is—Sheepshanks—what the dickens do you mean by consorting with a singular

verb? *Verbum cum nominativo*—I should say, so *are* sheepshanks.”

Byfield produced from one of the lockers a pork pie and a bottle of sherry (the *viaticum* in choice and assortment almost explained the man) and we sat down to the repast. Dalmahoy’s tongue ran like a brook. He addressed Mr. Sheepshanks with light-hearted impartiality as Philip’s royal son, as the Man of Ross, as the divine Clarinda. He elected him Professor of Marital Diplomacy to the University of Cramond. He passed the bottle and called on him for a toast, a song,—“Oblige me, Sheepshanks, by making the welkin ring.” Mr. Sheepshanks beamed, and gave us a sentiment instead. The little man was enjoying himself amazingly. “Fund of spirits your friend has, to be sure, sir—quite a fund.”

Either my own spirits were running low or the bitter cold had congealed them. I was conscious of my thin ball-suit, and moreover of a masterful desire of sleep. I felt no inclination for food, but drained half a tumblerful of the Sheepshanks whisky, and crawled beneath the pile of plaids. Byfield considerably helped to arrange them. He may or may not have caught some accent of uncertainty in my thanks: at anyrate he thought fit to add the assurance, “You may trust me, Mr. Ducie.” I saw that I could, and began almost to like the fellow.

In this posture I dozed through the afternoon. In dreams I heard Dalmahoy and Sheepshanks lifting their voices in amœbæan song, and became languidly aware that they were growing uproarious. I heard Byfield ex-

postulating, apparently in vain: for I awoke next to find that Sheepshanks had stumbled over me while illustrating, with an empty bottle, the motions of tossing the caber. "Old Hieland sports," explained Dalmahoy, wiping tears of vain laughter: "his mother's uncle was out in the Forty-five. Sorry to wake you, Ducie: balow, my babe!" It did not occur to me to smoke danger in this tomfoolery. I turned over and dozed again.

It seemed but a minute later that a buzzing in my ears awoke me; with a stab of pain as though my temples were being split with a wedge. On the instant I heard my name cried aloud, and sat up; to find myself blinking in a broad flood of moonlight over against the agitated face of Dalmahoy.

"Byfield——" I began.

Dalmahoy pointed. The aeronaut lay at my feet, collapsed like some monstrous marionette, with legs and arms a-splay. Across his legs, with head propped against a locker, reclined Sheepshanks, and gazed upwards with an approving smile. "Awkward business," explained Dalmahoy, between gasps. "Sheepshanks 'nmanageable; can't carry his liquor like a gentleman: thought it funny 'pitch out ballast. Byfield lost his temper: worst thing in the world. One thing I pride myself, 'menable to reason. No holding Sheepshanks: Byfield got him down; too late; faint both of us. Sheepshanks wants ring for 'shistance: pulls string: breaks. When string breaks *Lunardi* won't fall—tha 's the devil of it."

"*With* my tol-de-rol," Mr. Sheepshanks murmured. "Pretty—very pretty."

I cast a look aloft. The *Lunardi* was transformed: every inch of it frosted as with silver. All the ropes and cords ran with silver too, or liquid mercury. And in the midst of this sparkling cage, a little below the hoop, and five feet at least above reach, dangled the broken valve-string.

"Well," I said, "you have made a handsome mess of it! Pass me the broken end, and be good enough not to lose your head."

"I wish I could," he groaned, pressing it between his palms. "My dear sir, I'm not frightened, if that is your meaning."

I was, and horribly. But the thing had to be done. The reader will perhaps forgive me for touching shyly on the next two or three minutes, which still recur on the smallest provocation and play bogey with my dreams. To balance on the edge of night, quaking, gripping a frozen rope; to climb and feel the pit of one's stomach slipping like a bucket in a fathomless well—I suppose the intolerable pains in my head spurred me to the attempt—these and the urgent shortness of my breathing—much as toothache will drive a man up to the dentist's chair. I knotted the broken ends of the valve-string and slid back into the car: then tugged the valve open, while with my disengaged arm I wiped the sweat from my forehead. It froze upon the coat-cuff.

In a minute or so the drumming in my ears grew

less violent. Dalmahoy bent over the aeronaut, who was bleeding at the nose and now began to breathe stertorously. Sheepshanks had fallen into placid slumber. I kept the valve open until we descended into a stratum of fog—from which, no doubt, the *Lunardi* had lately risen: the moisture collected here would account for its congelated coat of silver. By-and-by, still without rising, we were quit of the fog, and the moon swept the hollow beneath us, rescuing solitary scraps and sheets of water and letting them slip again like impenetrable ghosts. Small fiery eyes opened and shut on us; cressets of flame on factory chimneys, more and more frequent. I studied the compass. Our course lay south by west. But our whereabouts? Dalmahoy, being appealed to, suggested Glasgow: and thenceforward I let him alone. Byfield snored on.

I pulled out my watch, which I had forgotten to wind; and found it run down. The hands stood at twenty minutes past four. Daylight, then, could not be far off. Eighteen hours—say twenty: and Byfield had guessed our rate at one time to be thirty miles an hour Five hundred miles——

A line of silver ahead: a ribbon drawn taut across the night, clean-edged, broadening—the sea! In a minute or two I caught the murmur of the coast. “Five hundred miles,” I began to reckon again, and a holy calm dawned on me as the *Lunardi* swept high over the fringing surf, and its voice faded back with the glimmer of a whitewashed fishing-haven.

I roused Dalmahoy and pointed. "The sea!"

"Looks like it. Which, I wonder?"

"The English Channel, man."

"I say—are you sure?"

"Eh?" exclaimed Byfield, waking up and coming forward with a stagger.

"The English Channel."

"The French fiddlestick," said he with equal promptness.

"Oh, have it as you please!" I retorted. It was not worth arguing with the man.

"What is the hour?"

I told him that my watch had run down. His had done the same. Dalmahoy did not carry one. We searched the still prostrate Sheepshanks: his had stopped at ten minutes to four. Byfield replaced it and underlined his disgust with a kick.

"A nice lot!" he ejaculated. "I owe you my thanks, Mr. Ducie, all the same. It was touch and go with us, and my head's none the better for it."

"But I say," expostulated Dalmahoy. "France! This is getting past a joke."

"So you are really beginning to discover that, are you?"

Byfield stood, holding by a rope, and studied the darkness ahead. Beside him I hugged my conviction—

hour after hour, it seemed: and still the dawn did not come.

He turned at length.

"I see a coast line to the south of us. This will be the Bristol Channel: and the balloon is sinking. Pitch out some ballast if these idiots have left any."

I found a couple of sand bags and emptied them overboard. The coast, as a matter of fact, was close at hand. But the *Lunardi* rose in time to clear the cliff barrier by some hundreds of feet. A wild sea ran on it: of its surf, as of a grey and agonising face, we caught one glimpse as we hurled high and clear over the roar: and, a minute later, to our infinite dismay were actually skimming the surface of a black hillside. "Hold on!" screamed Byfield, and I had barely time to tighten my grip when crash! the car struck the turf and pitched us together in a heap on the floor. Bump! the next blow shook us like peas in a bladder. I drew my legs up and waited for the third.

None came. The car gyrated madly and swung slowly back to equilibrium. We picked ourselves up, tossed rugs, coats, instruments, promiscuously overboard, and mounted again. The chine of the tall hill, our stumbling-block, fell back and was lost, and we swept forward into formless shadow.

"Confound it!" said Byfield, "the land can't be uninhabited!"

It was, for aught we could see. Not a light showed anywhere; and to make things worse the moon had abandoned us. For one good hour we swept through chaos to the tuneless lamentations of Sheepshanks, who declared that his collar-bone was broken.

Then Dalmahoy flung a hand upwards. Night lay like a sack around and below us: but right aloft, at the zenith, day was trembling. Slowly established, it spread and descended upon us until it touched a distant verge of hills, and there, cut by the rim of the rising sun, flowed suddenly with streams of crimson.

"Over with the grapnel!" Byfield sprang to the valve-string and pulled; and the featureless earth rushed up towards us.

The sunlight through which we were falling had not touched it yet. It leaped on us, drenched in shadow, like some incalculable beast from its covert: a land shaggy with woods and coppices. Between the woods a desolate river glimmered. A colony of herons rose from the tree-tops beneath us and flew squawking for the farther shore.

"This won't do," said Byfield, and shut the escape. "We must win clear of these woods. Hullo!" Ahead of us the river widened abruptly into a shining estuary, populous with anchored shipping. Tall hills flanked it, and in the curve of the westernmost hill a grey town rose from the waterside: its terraces climbing, tier upon tier,

like seats in an amphitheatre; its chimneys lifting their smoke over against the dawn. The tiers curved away southward to a round castle and a spit of rock, off which a brig under white canvas stood out for the line of the open sea.

We swept across the roadstead towards the town, trailing our grapnel as it were a hooked fish, a bare hundred feet above the water. Faces stared up at us from the ships' decks. The crew of one lowered a boat to pursue; we were half a mile away before it touched the water. Should we clear the town? At Byfield's orders we stripped off our overcoats and stood ready to lighten ship: but seeing that the deflected wind in the estuary was carrying us towards the suburbs and the harbour's mouth, he changed his mind.

"It is devil or deep sea," he announced. "We will try the grapnel. Look to it, Ducie, while I take the valve!" He pressed a clasp-knife into my hand. "Cut, if I give the word."

We descended a few feet. We were skimming the ridge. The grapnel touched, and, in the time it takes you to wink, had ploughed through a kitchen garden, uprooting a regiment of currant bushes; had leaped clear, and was caught in the eaves of a wooden outhouse, fetching us up with a dislocating shock. I heard a rending noise, and picked myself up in time to see the building collapse like a house of cards and a pair of de-

mented pigs emerge from the ruins and plunge across the garden-beds. And with that I was pitched off my feet again as the hook caught in an iron *chevaux-de-frise*, and held fast.

"Hold tight!" shouted Byfield, as the car lurched and struggled, careering desperately. "Don't cut, man! What the devil!"

Our rope had tautened over the coping of a high stone wall; and the straining *Lunardi*—a very large and handsome blossom, bending on a very thin stalk—overhung a gravelled yard; and lo! from the centre of it stared up at us, rigid with amazement, the faces of a squad of British red-coats!

I believe that the first glimpse of that abhorred uniform brought my knife down upon the rope. In two seconds I had slashed through the strands, and the flaccid machine lifted and bore us from their ken. But I see their faces yet, as in *basso relievo*: round-eyed, open-mouthed; honest country faces, and boyish, every one; an awkward squad of recruits at drill, fronting a red-headed sergeant; the sergeant, with cane held horizontally across and behind his thighs, his face upturned with the rest, and "Irishman" on every feature of it. And so the vision fled, and Byfield's language claimed attention. The man took the whole vocabulary of British profanity at a rush, and swore himself to a standstill. As he paused for second wind I struck in:

"Mr. Byfield, you open the wrong valve. We drift, as you say, towards—nay, over the open sea. As master of this balloon, I suggest that we descend within reasonable distance of the brig yonder; which, as I make out, is backing her sails; which, again, can only mean that she observes us and is preparing to lower a boat."

He saw the sense of this, and turned to business, though with a snarl. As a gull from the cliff, the *Lunardi* slanted downwards, and passing the brig by less than a cable's length to leeward, soused into the sea.

I say "soused": for I confess that the shock belied the promise of our easy descent. The *Lunardi* floated: but it also drove before the wind. And as it dragged the car after it like a tilted pail, the four drenched and blinded aeronauts struggled through the spray and gripped the hoop, the netting—nay, dug their nails into the oiled silk. In its new element the machine became inspired with a sudden infernal malice. It sank like a pillow if we tried to climb it: it rolled us over in the brine; it allowed us no moment for a backward glance. I spied a small cutter-rigged craft tacking towards us, a mile and more to leeward, and wondered if the captain of the brig had left our rescue to it. He had not. I heard a shout behind us; a rattle of oars as the bowmen shipped them; and a hand gripped my collar. So one by one we were plucked—uncommon specimens!—

from the deep; rescued from what Mr. Sheepshanks a minute later, as he sat on a thwart and wiped his spectacles, justly termed "a predicament, sir, as disconcerting as any my experience supplies."

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTAIN COLENZO.

"BUT what be us to do with the balloon, sir?" the coxswain demanded.

Had it been my affair, I believe I should have obeyed a ridiculous impulse and begged them to keep it for their trouble; so weary was I of the machine. Byfield, however, directed them to slit a seam of the oiled silk and cut away the car, which was by this time wholly submerged and not to be lifted. At once the *Lunardi* collapsed and became manageable; and having roped it to a ring-bolt astern, the crew fell to their oars.

My teeth were chattering. These operations of salvage had taken time, and it took us a further unconscionable time to cover the distance between us and the brig as she lay hove-to, her maintopsail aback and her head-sails drawing.

"Feels like towing a whale, sir," the oarsman behind me panted.

I whipped round. The voice—yes, and the face—were the voice and face of the seaman who sat and steered us: the voice English, of a sort; the face of no

pattern that I recognised for English. The fellows were as like as two peas: as like as the two drovers Sim and Candlish had been: you might put them both at forty; grizzled men, pursed about the eyes with sea-faring. And now that I came to look, the three rowers forward, though mere lads, repeated their elders' features and build; the gaunt frame, the long, serious face, the swarthy complexion and meditative eye—in short, Don Quixote of la Mancha at various stages of growth. Men and lads, I remarked, wore silver earrings.

I was speculating on this likeness when we shipped oars and fell alongside the brig's ladder. At the head of it my hand was taken, and I was helped on deck with ceremony by a tall man in loose blue jacket and duck trousers: an old man, bent and frail; by his air of dignity, the master of the vessel, and by his features as clearly the patriarch of the family. He lifted his cap and addressed us with a fine but (as I now recall it) somewhat tired courtesy.

“An awkward adventure, gentlemen.”

We thanked him in proper form.

“I am pleased to have been of service. The pilot-cutter yonder could hardly have fetched you in less than twenty minutes. I have signalled her alongside, and she will convey you back to Falmouth; none the worse, I hope, for your wetting.”

“A convenience,” said I, “of which my friends will gladly avail themselves. For my part, I do not propose to return.”

He paused, weighing my words; obviously puzzled, but politely anxious to understand. His eyes were grey and honest, even childishly honest, but dulled about the rim of the iris and a trifle vacant, as though the world with its train of affairs had passed beyond his active concern. I keep my own eyes about me when I travel, and have surprised just such a look, before now, behind the spectacles of very old men who sit by the roadside and break stones for a living.

"I fear, sir, that I do not take you precisely."

"Why," said I, "if I may guess, this is one of the famous Falmouth packets?"

"As to that, sir, you are right, and yet wrong. She *was* a Packet, and (if I may say it) a famous one." His gaze travelled aloft, and descending rested on mine with a sort of gentle resignation. "But the old pennon is down, as you see. At present she sails on a private adventure, and under private commission."

"A privateer?"

"You may call it that."

"The adventure hits my humour even more nicely. Accept me, Captain——"

"Colenso."

"Accept me, Captain Colenso, for your passenger: I will not say comrade-in-arms—naval warfare being so far beyond my knowledge, which it would perhaps be more descriptive to call ignorance. But I can pay——" I thrust a hand nervously into my breast pocket, and blessed Flora for her waterproof bag. "Excuse me,

Captain, if I speak with my friend here in private for a moment."

I drew Byfield aside. "Your notes? The salt water——"

"You see," said he, "I am a martyr to acidity of the stomach."

"Man! do I invite the confidence of your stomach?"

"Consequently I never make an ascension unaccompanied by a small bottle of Epsom salts, tightly corked."

"And you threw away the salts and substituted the notes?—that was clever of you, Byfield."

I lifted my voice. "And Mr. Dalmahoy, I presume, returns to his sorrowing folk."

The extravagant cheerfully corrected me. "They will not sorrow: but I shall return to them. Of their grudging pension I have eighteenpence in my pocket. But I propose to travel with Sheepshanks, and raise the wind by showing his tricks. He shall toss the caber from Land's End to Forthside, cheered by the plaudits of the intervening taverns and furthered by their bounty."

"A progress which we must try to expedite, if only out of regard for Mrs. Sheepshanks." I turned to Captain Colenso again. "Well, sir, will you accept me for your passenger?"

"I doubt that you are joking, sir."

"And I swear to you that I am not."

He hesitated; tottered to the companion, and called down, "Susannah! Susannah! A moment on deck, if

you please. One of these gentlemen wishes to ship as passenger."

A dark-browed woman of middle age thrust her head above the ladder and eyed me. Even so might a ruminating cow gaze over her hedge upon some posting wayfarer.

"What's he dressed in?" she demanded abruptly.

"Madam, it was intended for a ball-suit."

"You will do no dancing here, young man."

"My dear lady, I accept that and every condition you may impose. Whatever the discipline of the ship——"

She cut me short. "Have you told him, father?"

"Why no. You see, sir, I ought to tell you that this is not an ordinary voyage."

"Nor, for that matter, is mine."

"You will be exposed to risks."

"In a privateer that goes without saying."

"The risk of capture."

"Naturally: though a brave captain will not dwell on it." And I bowed.

"But I do dwell on it," he answered earnestly, a red spot showing on either cheek. "I must tell you, sir, that we are very likely indeed to fall into an enemy's hands."

"Say certain," chimed in Susannah.

"Yes, I will say we are certain. I cannot in conscience do less." He sought his daughter's eyes. She nodded.

"Oh, damn your conscience!" thought I, my stomach

rising in contempt for this noble-looking but extremely faint-hearted privateersman. "Come," I said, rallying him, "we fall in with a Frenchman, or—let us suppose—an American; that is our object, eh?"

"Yes, with an American. That is our object, to be sure."

"Then I warrant we give a good account of ourselves. Tut, tut, man—an ex-packet captain!"

I pulled up in sheer wonder at the lunacy of our dispute and the side he was forcing me to take. Here was I haranguing a grey-headed veteran on his own quarter-deck and exhorting him to valour! In a flash I saw myself befooled, tricked into playing the patronising amateur, complacently posturing for the derision of gods and men. And Captain Colenso, who aimed but to be rid of me, was laughing in his sleeve, no doubt. In a minute even Sheepshanks would catch the jest. Now, I do mortally hate to be laughed at: it may be disciplinary for most men, but it turns me obstinate.

Captain Colenso, at anyrate, dissembled his mirth to perfection. The look which he shifted from me to Susannah and back was eloquent of senile indecision.

"I cannot explain to you, sir. The consequences—I might mitigate them for you—still you must risk them." He broke off and appealed to me. "I would rather you did not insist: I would indeed! I must beg of you, sir, not to press it."

"But I do press it," I answered, stubborn as a mule. "I tell you that I am ready to accept all risks. But if

you want me to return with my friends in the cutter, you must summon your crew to pitch me down the ladder. And there's the end on't."

"Dear, dear! Tell me at least, sir, that you are an unmarried man."

"Up to now I have that misfortune." I aimed a bow at Mistress Susannah; but that lady had turned her broad shoulders, and it missed fire. "Which reminds me," I continued, "to ask for the favour of pen, ink and paper. I wish to send a letter ashore, to the mail."

She invited me to follow her; and I descended to the main cabin, a spick-and-span apartment, where we surprised two passably good-looking damsels at their housework, the one polishing a mahogany swing-table, the other a brass door-handle. They picked up their cloths, dropped me a curtesy apiece, and disappeared at a word from Susannah, who bade me be seated at the swing-table and set writing materials before me. The room was lit by a broad stern-window, and lined along two of its sides with mahogany doors leading, as I supposed, to sleeping cabins: the panels—not to speak of the brass handles and finger-plates—shining so that a man might have seen his face in them, to shave by. "But why all these women, on board a privateer?" thought I, as I tried a quill on my thumb-nail and embarked upon my first love-letter.

"DEAREST,—This line with my devotion to tell you that the balloon has descended safely, and your Anne finds himself on board . . ."

"By the way, Miss Susannah, what is the name of this ship?"

"She is called the *Lady Nepean*: and I am a married woman and the mother of six."

"I felicitate you, madam." I bowed, and resumed my writing:—

"... the *Lady Nepean* packet, outward bound from Falmouth to . . ."

"Excuse me, but where the dickens are we bound for?"

"For the coast of Massachusetts, I believe."

"You believe?"

She nodded. "Young man, if you'll take my advice, you'll go back."

"Madam," I answered, on the sudden impulse, "I am an escaped French prisoner." And with that, having tossed my cap over the mills (as they say), I leaned back in the settee, and we regarded each other.

"——escaped," I continued, still my eyes on hers, "with a trifle of money, but minus my heart. I write this to the fair daughter of Britain who has it in her keeping. And now what have you to say?"

"Ah, well," she mused, "the Lord's ways be past finding out. It may be the easier for you."

. . Apparently it was the habit of this ship's company to speak in enigmas. I caught up my pen again:—

"... The coast of Massachusetts, in the United States of America, whence I hope to make my way in good time to France. Though you have news, dearest, I fear none can reach me for awhile. Yet, and though you have no more to write than 'I love you, Anne,' write it, and commit it to Mr. Robbie, who will forward it to Mr. Romaine, who in turn may find a means to get it smuggled through to Paris, Rue du Fouarre, 16. It should be consigned to the widow Jupille, 'to be called for by the corporal who praised her *vin blanc*.' She will remember; and in truth a man who had the courage to praise it deserves remembrance as singular among the levies of France. Should a youth of the name of Rowley present himself before you, you may trust his fidelity absolutely, his sagacity not at all. And so (since the boat waits to take this) I kiss the name of Flora, and subscribe myself—until I come to claim her, and afterwards to eternity—her *prisoner*."

"ANNE."

I had, in fact, a second reason for abbreviating this letter and sealing it in a hurry. The movements of the brig, though slight, were perceptible, and in the close air of the main cabin my head already began to swim. I hastened on deck in time to shake hands with my companions and confide the letter to Byfield with instructions for posting it. "And if your share in our adventure should come into public question," said I, "you must apply to a Major Chevenix, now quartered in Edinburgh Castle, who has a fair inkling of the facts, and as a man of honour will not decline to assist you. You have Dalmahoy, too, to back your assertion that you knew me only as Mr. Ducie." Upon Dalmahoy I pressed a note for his and Mr. Sheepshanks's travelling expenses. "My dear fellow," he protested, "I couldn't *dream* . . . if you are sure it won't inconvenience . . . merely as a loan . . . and deuced handsome of you, I

will say." He kept the cutter waiting while he drew an I.O.U., in which I figured as Bursar and Almoner (*honoris causâ*) to the Senatus Academicus of Cramond-on-Almond. Mr. Sheepshanks meanwhile shook hands with me impressively, "It has been a memorable experience, sir. I shall have much to tell my wife on my return."

It occurred to me as probable that the lady would have even more to say to him. He stepped into the cutter, and, as they pushed off, was hilariously bonneted by Mr. Dalmahoy, by way of parting salute. "Starboard after braces!" Captain Colenso called to his crew. The yards were trimmed and the *Lady Nepean* slowly gathered way, while I stood by the bulwarks gazing after my friends and attempting to persuade myself that the fresh air was doing me good.

Captain Colenso perceived my queasiness, and advised me to seek my berth and lie down; and on my replying with haggard defiance, took my arm gently, as if I had been a wilful child, and led me below. I passed beyond one of the mahogany doors leading from the main cabin; and in that seclusion I ask you to leave me face to face with the next forty-eight hours. It was a dreadful time.

Nor at the end of it did gaiety wait on a partially recovered appetite. The ladies of the ship nursed me, and tickled my palate with the lightest of sea diet. The men strewed seats for me on deck, and touched their

caps with respectful sympathy. One and all were indefatigably kind, but taciturn to a degree beyond belief. A fog of mystery hung and deepened about them and the *Lady Nepean*, and I crept about the deck in a continuous evil dream, entangling myself in impossible theories. To begin with, there were eight women on board; a number not to be reconciled with serious privateering; all daughters or sons' wives or grand-daughters of Captain Colenso. Of the men—twenty-three in all—those who were not called Colenso were called Pengelly; and most of them convicted landsmen by their bilious countenances and unhandy movements; men fresh from the plough-tail by their gait, yet with no ruddy impress of field-work and the open-air.

Twice every day, and thrice on Sundays, this extraordinary company gathered bare-headed to the poop for a religious service which it would be colourless to call frantic. It began decorously enough with a quavering exposition of some portion of Holy Writ by Captain Colenso. But by-and-by (and especially at the evening office) his listeners kindled and opened on him with a skirmishing fire of "Amens." Then, worked by degrees to an ecstasy, they broke into cries of thanksgiving and mutual encouragement; they jostled for the rostrum (a long nine-pounder swivel); and then speaker after speaker declaimed his soul's experiences until his voice cracked, while the others sobbed, exhorted, even leapt in the air. "Stronger, brother!" "'Tis working, 'tis working!" "O deliverance!" "O streams of re-

demption!" For ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour maybe, the ship was a Babel, a Bedlam. And then the tumult would die down as suddenly as it had arisen, and dismissed by the old man, the crew, with faces once more inscrutable, but twitching with spent emotion, scattered to their usual tasks.

Five minutes after these singular outbreaks it was difficult to believe in them. Captain Colenso paced the quarter-deck once more with his customary shuffle, his hands beneath his coat-tails, his eyes conning the ship with their usual air of mild abstraction. Now and again he paused to instruct one of his incapables in the trimming of a brace, or to correct the tie of a knot. He never scolded; seldom lifted his voice. By his manner of speech, and the ease of his authority, he and his family might have belonged to separate ranks of life. Yet I seemed to detect method in their obedience. The veriest fumbler went about his work with a concentrated gravity of bearing, as if he fulfilled a remoter purpose, and understood it while he tied his knots into "grannies," and generally mismanaged the job in hand.

Towards the middle of our second week out, we fell in with a storm—a rotatory affair, and soon over by reason that we struck the outer fringe of it; but to a landsman sufficiently daunting while it lasted. Late in the afternoon I thrust my head up for a look around. We were weltering along in horrible forty-foot seas, over which our bulwarks tilted at times until from the com-

panion hatchway I stared plumb into the grey sliding chasms, and felt like a fly on the wall. The *Lady Nepean* hurled her old timbers along under close-reefed maintopsail, and a rag of a foresail only. The captain had housed topgallant masts and lashed his guns in-board; yet she rolled so that you would not have trusted a cat on her storm-washed decks. They were desolate but for the captain and helmsman on the poop; the helmsman, a mere lad—the one, in fact, who had pulled the bow-oar to our rescue—lashed and gripping the spokes pluckily, but with a white face which told that, though his eyes were strained on the binnacle, his mind ran on the infernal seas astern. Over him, in sea-boots and oilskins, towered Captain Colenso—rejuvenated, transfigured; his body swaying easily to every lurch and plunge of the brig, his face entirely composed and cheerful, his salt-rimmed eyes contracted a little, but alert and even boyishly bright. An heroic figure of a man!

My heart warmed to Captain Colenso; and next morning, as we bowled forward with a temperate breeze on our quarter, I took occasion to compliment him on the *Lady Nepean's* behaviour.

"Ay," said he abstractedly; "the old girl made pretty good weather of it."

"I suppose we were never in what you would call real danger?"

He faced me with sudden earnestness. "Mr. Ducie, I have served the Lord all my days, and He will not

sink the ship that carries my honour." Giving me no time to puzzle over this, he changed his tone. "You'll scarce believe it, but in her young days she had a very fair turn of speed."

"Her business surely demands it still," said I. Only an arrant landsman could have reconciled the lumbering old craft with any idea of privateering; but this was only my theory, and I clung to it.

"We shall not need to test her."

"You rely on your guns, then?" I had observed the care lavished on these. They were of brass, and shone like the door-plates in the main cabin.

"Why, as to that," he answered evasively, "I've had to before now. The last voyage I commanded her—it was just after the war broke out with America—we fell in with a schooner off the Banks; we were outward bound for Halifax. She carried twelve nine-pounder carronades and two long nines, beside a big fellow on a traverse; and we had the guns you see—eight nine-pounders and one chaser of the same calibre—post-office guns, we call them. But we beat her off after two hours of it."

"And saved the mails?"

He rose abruptly (we had seated ourselves on a couple of hen-coops under the break of the poop). "You will excuse me. I have an order to give"; and he hurried up the steps to the quarter-deck.

It must have been ten days after this that he stopped

me in one of my eternal listless promenades and invited me to sit beside him again.

"I wish to take your opinion, Mr. Ducie. You have not, I believe, found salvation? You are not one of us, as I may say?"

"Meaning by 'us'?"

"I and mine, sir, are unworthy followers of the Word, as preached by John Wesley."

"Why, no; that is not my religion."

"But you are a gentleman." I bowed. "And on a point of honour—do you think, sir, that as a servant of the King one should obey his earthly master even to doing what conscience forbids?"

"That might depend——"

"But on a point of honour, sir? Suppose that you had pledged your private word, in a just, nay, a generous bargain, and were commanded to break it. Is there anything could override that?"

I thought of my poor old French colonel and his broken *parole*; and was silent. "Can you not tell me the circumstances?" I suggested at length.

He had been watching me eagerly. But he shook his head now, sighed, and drew a small Bible from his pocket. "I am not a gentleman, sir. I laid it before the Lord: but," he continued naïvely, "I wanted to learn how a gentleman would look at it." He searched for a text, turning the pages with long, nervous fingers; but desisted with another sigh, and, a moment later,

was summoned away to solve some difficulty with the ship's reckoning.

My respect for the captain had been steadily growing. He was so amiable, too, so untiringly courteous; he bore his sorrow—whatever the cause might be—with so gentle a resignation; that I caught myself pitying even while I cursed him and his crew for their inhuman reticence.

But my respect vanished pretty quickly next day. We were seated at dinner in the main cabin—the captain at the head of the table, and, as usual, crumbling his biscuit in a sort of waking trance—when Mr. Reuben Colenso, his eldest son and acting mate, put his solemn face in at the door with news of a sail about four miles distant on the lee bow. I followed the captain on deck. The stranger, a schooner, had been lying-to when first descried in the hazy weather; but was standing now to intercept us. At two miles distance—it being then about two o'clock—I saw that she hoisted British colours.

“But that flag was never sewn in England,” Captain Colenso observed, studying her through his glass. His cheeks, usually of that pallid ivory colour proper to old age, were flushed with a faint carmine, and I observed a suppressed excitement in all his crew. For my part, I expected no better than to play target in the coming engagement: but it surprised me that he served out no cutlasses, ordered up no powder from the hold, and, in short, took no single step to clear the *Lady Nepean* for action or put his men in fighting trim.

The most of them were gathered about the fore-hatch, to the total neglect of their guns, which they had been cleaning assiduously all the morning. On we stood without shifting our course by a point, and were almost within range when the schooner ran up the stars-and-stripes and plumped a round shot ahead of us by way of hint.

I stared at Captain Colenso. Could he mean to surrender without one blow? He had exchanged his glass for a speaking trumpet, and waited, fumbling with it, his face twitching painfully. A cold dishonouring suspicion gripped me. The man was here to betray his flag. I glanced aloft: the British ensign flew at the peak. And as I turned my head, I felt rather than saw the flash, heard the shattering din as the puzzled American luffed up and let fly across our bows with a raking broadside. Doubtless she, too, took note of our defiant ensign, and leaped at the nearest guess, that we meant to run her aboard.

Now, whether my glance awoke Captain Colenso, or this was left to the all but simultaneous voice of the guns, I know not. But as their smoke rolled between us I saw him drop his trumpet and run with a crazed face to the taffrail, where the halliards led. The traitor had forgotten to haul down his flag!

It was too late. While he fumbled with the halliards, a storm of musketry burst and swept the quarter-deck. He flung up both hands, spun round upon his heel, and pitched backwards at the helmsman's feet,

and the loosened ensign dropped slowly and fell across him, as if to cover his shame.

Instantly the firing ceased. I stood there between compassion and disgust, willing yet loathing to touch the pitiful corpse, when a woman—Susannah—ran screaming by me and fell on her knees beside it. I saw a trickle of blood ooze beneath the scarlet folds of the flag. It crawled along the plank, hesitated at a seam, and grew there to an oddly shaped pool. I watched it. In shape I thought it remarkably like the map of Ireland. And I became aware that someone was speaking to me, and looked up to find a lean and lantern-jawed American come aboard and standing at my shoulder.

“Are you anywise hard of hearing, stranger? Or must I repeat to you that this licks cockfighting?”

“I, at anyrate, am not disputing it, sir.”

“The *Lady Nepean*, too! Is that the Cap’n yonder? I thought as much. Dead, hey? Well, he’d better *stay* dead; though I’d have enjoyed the inside o’ five minutes’ talk, just to find out what he did it for.”

“Did what?”

“Why, brought the *Lady Nepean* into these waters, and Commodore Rodgers no further away than Rhode Island, by all accounts. He must have had a nerve. And what post might *you* be holding on this all-fired packet? Darn *me*, but you have females enough on board!” For indeed there were three poor creatures

kneeling now and crooning over the dead captain. The men had surrendered—they had no arms to fling down—and were collected in the waist, under guard of a cordon of Yankees. One lay senseless on deck, and two or three were bleeding from splinter wounds; for the enemy, her freeboard being lower by a foot or two than the wall sides of the *Lady Nepean*, had done little execution on deck, whatever the wounds in our hull might be.

“I beg your pardon, Captain——”

“Seccombe, sir, is my name. Alpheus Q. Seccombe, of the *Manhattan* schooner.”

“Well, then, Captain Seccombe, I am a passenger on board this ship, and know neither her business here nor why she has behaved in a fashion that makes me blush for her flag—which, by the way, I have every reason to abominate.”

“Oh, come now! You’re trying it on. It’s a yard-arm matter, and I don’t blame you, to be sure. Cap’n sank the mails?”

“There were none to sink, I believe.”

He conned me curiously.

“You don’t look like a Britisher, either?”

“I trust not. I am the Viscount Anne de Kéroual de St. Yves, escaped from a British war-prison.”

“Lucky for you if you prove it. We’ll get to the bottom of this.” He faced about and called, “Who’s the first officer of this brig?”

Reuben Colenso was allowed to step forward.

Blood from a scalp-wound had run and caked on his right cheek, but he stepped squarely enough.

"Bring him below," Captain Seccombe commanded. "And you, Mr. What's-your-name, lead the way. It's one or the other of us will get the hang of this affair."

He seated himself at the head of the table in the main cabin, and spat ceremoniously on the floor.

"Now, sir: you are, or were, first officer of this brig?"

The prisoner, standing between his two guards, gripped his stocking cap nervously. "Will you please to tell me, sir, if my father is killed?"

"Seth, my lad, I want room." One of the guards, a strapping youngster, stepped and flung open a pane of the stern window. Captain Seccombe spat out of it with nonchalant dexterity before answering:

"I guess he is. Brig's name?"

"The *Lady Nepean*."

"Mail packet?"

"Yes, sir; leastways——"

"Now see here, Mister First Officer Colenso junior: it's a shortish trip between this and the yard-arm, and it may save you some su-perfluous lying if I tell you that in August, last year, the *Lady Nepean* packet, Captain Colenso, outward bound for Halifax, met the *Hitchcock* privateer off the Great Bank of Newfoundland, and beat her off after two hours' fighting. You were on board of her?"

"I tended the stern gun."

"*Very* good. The next day, being still off the Banks, she fell in with Commodore Rodgers, of the United States frigate *President*, and surrendered to him right away."

"We sank the mails."

"You did, my man. Notwithstanding which, that lion-hearted hero treated you with the forbearance of a true-born son of freedom." Captain Seccombe's voice took an oratorical roll. "He saw that you were bleeding from your fray. He fed you at his hospitable board; he would not suffer you to be de-nuded of the least trifle. Nay, what did he promise?—but to send your father and his crew and passengers back to England in their own ship, on their swearing, upon their sacred honour, that she should return to Boston harbour with an equal number of American prisoners from England. Your father swore to that upon the Old and New Testaments, severally and conjointly; and the *Lady Nepean* sailed home for all the world like a lamb from the wolf's jaws, with a single American officer inside of her. And how did your dog-damned Government respect this noble confidence? In a way, sir, that would have brought a blush to the cheek of a low-down attorney's clerk. They re-pudiated. Under shelter of a notification that no exchange of prisoners on the high seas would count as valid, this perjured tyrant and his myrmidons went back on their captain's oath, and kept the brig; and the American officer came home empty-handed. Your father was told to resume his duties,

immortal souls being cheap in a country where they press seamen's bodies. And now, Mister First Officer Colenso, perhaps you'll explain how he had the impudence to come within two hundred miles of a coast where his name smelt worse than vermin."

"He was coming back, sir."

"Hey?"

"Back to Boston, sir. You see, Cap'n, father wasn't a rich man, but he had saved a trifle. He didn't go back to the service, though told that he might. It preyed on his mind. We was all very fond of father; being all one family, as you might say, though some of us had wives and families, and some were over to Redruth, to the mines."

"Stick to the point."

"But this *is* the point, Cap'n. He was coming back, you see. The *Lady Nepean* wasn't fit for much after the handling she'd had. She was going for twelve hundred pounds: the Post Office didn't look for more. We got her for eleven hundred, with the guns, and the repairs may have cost a hundred and fifty; but you'll find the account books in the cupboard there. Father had a matter of five hundred laid by, and a little over."

Captain Seccombe removed his legs from the cabin-table, tilted his chair forward and half rose in his seat.

"You *bought* her?"

"That's what I'm telling you, sir: though father'd have put it much clearer. You see, he laid it before

the Lord; and then he laid it before all of us. It preyed on his mind. My sister Susannah stood up and she said, 'I reckon I'm the most respectably married of all of you, having a farm of my own; but we can sell up, and all the world's a home to them that fears the Lord. We can't stock up with American prisoners, but we can go ourselves instead; and judging by the prisoners I've a-seen brought in, Commodore Rodgers 'll be glad to take us. What he does to us is the Lord's affair.' That's what she said, sir. Of course we kept it quiet: we put it about that the *Lady Nepean* was for Canada, and the whole family going out for emigrants. This here gentleman we picked up outside Falmouth; perhaps he've told you."

Captain Seccombe stared at me, and I at Captain Seccombe. Reuben Colenso stood wringing his cap.

At length the American found breath enough to whistle. "I'll have to put back to Boston about this, though it's money out of pocket. This here's a matter for Commodore Bainbridge. Take a seat, Mr. Colenso."

"I was going to ask," said the prisoner simply, "if, before you put me in irons, I might go on deck and look at father. It'll be only a moment, sir."

"Yes, sir, you may. And if you can get the ladies to excuse me, I will follow in a few minutes. I wish to pay him my respects. It's my opinion," he added pensively, as the prisoner left the cabin—"it's my opinion that the man's story is genu-wine."

He repeated the word, five minutes later, as we

stood on the quarter-deck beside the body. "A genuine man, sir, unless I am mistaken."

Well, the question is one for casuists. In my travels I have learnt this, that men are greater than governments; wiser sometimes, honester always. Heaven deliver me from any such problem as killed this old packet-captain! Between loyalty to his king and loyalty to his conscience he had to choose, and it is likely enough that he erred. But I believe that he fought it out, and found on his country's side a limit of shame to which he could not stoop. A man so placed, perhaps, may even betray his country to her honour. In this hope at least the flag which he had hauled down covered his body still as we committed it to the sea, its service or disservice done.

Two days later we anchored in the great harbour at Boston, where Captain Seccombe went with his story and his prisoners to Commodore Bainbridge, who kept them pending news of Commodore Rodgers. They were sent, a few weeks later, to Newport, Rhode Island, to be interrogated by that commander; and, to the honour of the Republic, were released on a liberal *parole*; but whether, when the war ended, they returned to England or took oath as American citizens, I have not learnt. I was luckier. The Commodore allowed Captain Seccombe to detain me while the French consul made inquiry into my story; and during the two months which the consul thought fit to take over it, I was a

guest in the captain's house. And here I made my bow to Miss Amelia Seccombe, an accomplished young lady, "who," said her doating father, "has acquired a considerable proficiency in French, and will be glad to swap ideas with you in that language." Miss Seccombe and I did not hold our communications in French; and, observing her disposition to substitute the warmer language of the glances, I took the bull by the horns, told her my secret, and rhapsodised on Flora. Consequently no Nausicaa figures in this Odyssey of mine. Nay, the excellent girl flung herself into my cause, and bombarded her father and the consular office with such effect that on 2nd February 1814, I waved farewell to her from the deck of the barque *Shawmut*, bound from Boston to Bordeaux.

CHAPTER XV.

IN PARIS.—ALAIN PLAYS HIS LAST CARD.

ON the 10th of March at sunset the *Shawmut* passed the Pointe de Grave fort and entered the mouth of the Gironde, and at eleven o'clock next morning dropped anchor a little below Blaye, under the guns of the *Regulus*, 74. We were just in time, a British fleet being daily expected there to co-operate with the Duc d'Angoulême and Count Lynch, who was then preparing to pull the tricolor from his shoulder and betray Bordeaux to Beresford, or, if you prefer it, to the Bourbon. News of his purpose had already travelled down to Blaye, and therefore no sooner were my feet once more on the soil of my beloved France, than I turned them towards Libourne, or rather Fronsac, and the morning after my arrival there, started for the capital.

But so desperately were the joints of travel dislocated (the war having depleted the country alike of cattle and able-bodied drivers) and so frequent were the breakdowns by the way, that I might as expeditiously have trudged it. It cost me fifteen good days to reach Orleans, and at Etampes (which I reached on the morning of the 30th) the driver of the tottering diligence flatly

declined to proceed. The Cossacks and Prussians were at the gates of Paris. "Last night we could see the fires of their bivouacs. If Monsieur listens he can hear the firing." The Empress had fled from the Tuileries. "Whither?" The driver, the aubergiste, the disinterested crowd, shrugged their shoulders. "To Rambouillet, probably. God knew what was happening or what would happen. The Emperor was at Troyes, or at Sens, or else as near as Fontainebleau; nobody knew for certain which. But the fugitives from Paris had been pouring in for days, and not a cart or four-footed beast was to be hired for love or money, though I hunted Etampes for hours.

At length, and at nightfall, I ran against a bow-kneed grey mare, and a *cabriolet de place*, which by its label, belonged to Paris; the pair wandering the street under what it would be flattery to call the guidance of an eminently drunken driver. I boarded him; he dissolved at once into maudlin tears and prolixity. It appeared that on the 29th he had brought over a bourgeois family from the capital, and had spent the last three days in perambulating Etampes, and the past three nights in crapulous slumber within his vehicle. Here was my chance, and I demanded to know if for a price he would drive me back with him to Paris. He declared, still weeping, that he was fit for anything. "For my part, I am ready to die, and Monsieur knows that we shall never reach."

"Still, anything is better than Etampes."

For some inscrutable reason this struck him as excessively comic. He assured me that I was a brave fellow, and bade me jump up at once. Within five minutes we were jolting towards Paris. Our progress was all but inappreciable, for the grey mare had come to the end of her powers, and her master's monologue kept pace with her. His anecdotes were all of the past three days. The iron of Etampes apparently had entered his soul and effaced all memory of his antecedent career. Of the war, of any recent public events, he could tell me nothing.

I had half expected—supposing the Emperor to be near Fontainebleau—to happen on his vedettes, but we had the road to ourselves, and reached Longjumeau a little before daybreak without having encountered a living creature. Here we knocked up the proprietor of a cabaret, who assured us between yawns, that we were going to our doom, and after baiting the grey and dosing ourselves with execrable brandy, pushed forward again. As the sky grew pale about us, I had my ears alert for the sound of artillery. But Paris kept silence. We passed Sceaux, and arrived at length at Montrouge and the barrier. It was open—abandoned—not a sentry, not a douanier visible.

"Where will Monsieur be pleased to descend?" my driver inquired, and added with an effort of memory, that he had a wife and two adorable children on a top floor in the Rue du Mont Parnasse, and stabled his mare handy by. I paid and watched him from the deserted

pavement as he drove away. A small child came running from a doorway behind me, and blundered against my legs. I caught him by the collar and demanded what had happened to Paris. "That I do not know," said the child, "but mamma is dressing herself to take me to the review. Tenez!" he pointed, and at the head of the long street I saw advancing the front rank of a blue-coated regiment of Prussians, marching across Paris to take up position on the Orleans road.

That was my answer. Paris had surrendered! And I had entered it from the south just in time, if I wished, to witness the entry of His Majesty the Emperor Alexander from the north. Soon I found myself one of a crowd converging towards the bridges, to scatter northward along the line of His Majesty's progress, from the Barrière de Pantin to the Champs Elysées, where the grand review was to be held. I chose this for my objective, and making my way along the Quays, found myself shortly before ten o'clock in the Place de la Concorde, where a singular little scene brought me to a halt.

About a score of young men—aristocrats by their dress and carriage—were gathered about the centre of the square. Each wore a white scarf and the Bourbon cockade in his hat; and their leader, a weedy youth with hay-coloured hair, had drawn a paper from his pocket, and was declaiming its contents at the top of a voice by several sizes too big for him:—

"For Paris is reserved the privilege, under circumstances now existing, to accelerate the dawn of Universal Peace. Her suffrage

is awaited with the interest which so immense a result naturally inspires,"

et cetera. Later on, I possessed myself of a copy of the Prince of Schwartzberg's proclamation, and identified the wooden rhetoric at once.

"Parisians! you have the example of Bordeaux before you" . . . Ay, by the Lord, they had—right under their eyes! The hay-coloured youth wound up his reading with a "Vive le Roi!" and his band of walking gentlemen took up the shout. The crowd looked on impassive; one or two edged away; and a grey-haired, soldierly horseman (whom I recognised for the Duc de Choiseul-Praslin) passing in full tenue of Colonel of the National Guard, reined up, and addressed the young men in a few words of grave rebuke. Two or three answered by snapping their fingers, and repeating their "Vive le Roi" with a kind of embarrassed defiance. But their performance, before so chilling an audience, was falling sadly flat when a dozen or more of young royalist bloods came riding up to reanimate it—among them, M. Louis de Chateaubriand, M. Talleyrand's brother, Archambaut de Périgord, the scoundrelly Marquis de Maubreuil—yes, and my cousin, the Vicomte de Saint Yves!

The indecency, the cynical and naked impudence of it, took me like a buffet. There, in a group of strangers, my cheek reddened under it, and for the moment I had a mind to run. I had done better to run. By a chance his eye missed mine as he swaggered past

at a canter, for all the world like a *tenore robusto* on horseback, with the rouge on his face, and his air of expansive Olympian blackguardism. He carried a lace white handkerchief at the end of his riding switch, and this was bad enough. But as he wheeled his bay thoroughbred, I saw that he had followed the *déclassé* Maubreuil's example and decorated the brute's tail with a Cross of the Legion of Honour. That brought my teeth together, and I stood my ground.

"Vive le Roi!" "Vivent les Bourbons!" "A bas le sabot corse!" Maubreuil had brought a basketful of white brassards and cockades, and the gallant horsemen began to ride about and press them upon the unresponsive crowd. Alain held one of the badges at arm's length as he pushed into the little group about me, and our eyes met.

"*Merci*," said I, "*retenez-le jusqu'à ce que nous nous rencontrons—Rue Grégoire de Tours!*"

His arm with the riding switch and laced handkerchief went up as though he had been stung. Before it could descend, I darted aside deep into the crowd which hustled around him, understanding nothing, but none the less sullenly hostile. "A bas les cocardes blanches!" cried one or two. "Who was the cur?" I heard Maubreuil's question as he pressed into the rescue, and Alain's reply, "Peste! A young relative of mine who is in a hurry to lose his head; whereas I prefer to choose the time for that."

I took this for a splutter of hatred, and even found

it laughable as I made my escape good. At the same time, our encounter had put me out of humour for gaping at the review, and I turned back and recrossed the river, to seek the Rue du Fouarre and the Widow Jupille.

Now the Rue du Fouarre, though once a very famous thoroughfare, is to-day perhaps as squalid as any that drains its refuse by a single gutter into the Seine, and the widow had been no beauty even in the days when she followed the 106th of the line as vivandière and before she wedded Sergeant Jupille of that regiment. But she and I had struck up a friendship over a flesh wound which I received in an affair of outposts on the Algueda, and thenceforward I taught myself to soften the edge of her white wine by the remembered virtues of her ointment, so that when Sergeant Jupille was cut off by a grapeshot in front of Salamanca, and his Philomène retired to take charge of his mother's wine shop in the Rue du Fouarre, she had enrolled my name high on the list of her prospective patrons. I felt myself, so to speak, a part of the goodwill of her house, and "Heaven knows," thought I, as I threaded the insalubrious street, "it is something for a soldier of the Empire to count even on this much in Paris to-day. *Est aliquid, quocunque loco, quocunque sacello. . .*."

Madame Jupille knew me at once, and we fell (figuratively speaking) upon each other's neck. Her shop was empty, the whole quarter had trooped off to the review. After mingling our tears (again figuratively)

over the fickleness of the capital, I inquired if she had any letters for me.

"Why, no, comrade."

"None?" I exclaimed with a very blank face.

"Not one"; Madame Jupille eyed me archly, and relented. "The reason being that Mademoiselle is too discreet."

"Ah!" I heaved a big sigh of relief. "You provoking woman, tell me what you mean by that?"

"Well now, it may have been ten days ago that a stranger called in and asked if I had any news of the corporal who praised my white wine. 'Have I any news,' said I, 'of a needle in a bundle of hay? They all praise it.'" (Oh, Madame Jupille!)

"The corporal I'm speaking of," said he, "is or was called Champdivers." "*Was!*" I cried, "you are not going to tell me he is dead?" and I declare to you, comrade, the tears came into my eyes. "No, he is not," said the stranger, "and the best proof is that he will be here inquiring for letters before long. You are to tell him that if he expects one from"—see, I took the name down on a scrap of paper, and stuck it in the wine glass here—"from Miss Flora Gilchrist, he will do well to wait in Paris until a friend finds means to deliver it by hand. And if he asks more about me, say that I am from"—tenez, I wrote the second name underneath—yes, that is it—"Mr. Romaine."

"Confound his caution!" said I. "What sort of man was this messenger?"

"Oh, a staid-looking man, dark and civil spoken. You might call him an upper servant, or perhaps a notary's clerk; very plainly dressed, in black."

"He spoke French."

"*Parfaitement*. What else?"

"And he has not called again?"

"To be sure, yes, and the day before yesterday, and seemed quite disappointed. 'Is there anything Monsieur would like to add to his message?' I asked. 'No,' said he, 'or stay, tell him that all goes well in the north, but he must not leave Paris until I see him.'"

You may guess how I cursed Mr. Romaine for this beating about the bush. If all went well in the north, what possible excuse of caution could the man have for holding back Flora's letter? And how, in any case, could it compromise me here in Paris? I had half a mind to take the bit in my teeth and post off at once for Calais. Still, there was the plain injunction, and the lawyer doubtless had a reason for it hidden somewhere behind his tiresome circumambulatory approaches. And his messenger might be back at any hour.

Therefore, though it went against the grain, I thought it prudent to take lodgings with Madame Jupille and possess my soul in patience. You will say that it should not have been difficult to kill time in Paris between the 31st of March and the 5th of April 1814. The entry of the Allies, Marmont's supreme betrayal, the Emperor's abdication, the Cossacks in the streets, the newspaper offices at work like hives under their new editors, and

buzzing contradictory news from morning to night; a new rumour at every café, a scuffle, or the makings of one at every street corner, and hour by hour a steady stream of manifestoes, placards, handbills, caricatures, and broadsheets of opprobrious verse—the din of it all went by me like the vain noises of a dream as I trod the pavements, intent upon my own hopes and perplexities. I cannot think that this was mere selfishness; rather, a deep disgust was weaning me from my country. If this Paris indeed were the reality, then was I the phantasm, the *revenant*; then was France—the France for which I had fought and my parents gone to the scaffold—a land that had never been, and our patriotism the shadow of a shade. Judge me not too hardly if in the restless, aimless perambulations of those five days, I crossed the bridge between the country that held neither kin nor friends for me, but only my ineffectual past, and the country wherein one human creature, if only one, had use for my devotion.

On the sixth day—that is, April 5th—my patience broke down. I took my resolution over lunch and a bottle of Beaujolais, and walked straight back from the restaurant to my lodgings, where I asked Madame Jupille for pen, ink, and paper, and sat down to advertise Mr. Romaine that, for good or ill, he might expect me in London within twenty-four hours of the receipt of this letter.

I had scarce composed the first sentence, when there came a knock at the door and Madame Jupille an-

nounced that two gentlemen desired to see me—"Show them up," said I, laying down my pen with a leaping heart; and in the doorway a moment later stood—my cousin Alain!

He was alone. He glanced with a grin of comprehension from me to the letter, advanced, set his hat on the table beside it, and his gloves (after blowing into them) beside his hat.

"My cousin," said he, "you show astonishing agility from time to time; but on the whole you are damned easy to hunt."

I had risen. "I take it you have pressing business to speak of, since amid your latest political occupations you have been at pains to seek me out. If so, I will ask you to be brief."

"No pains at all," he corrected affably. "I have known all the time that you were here. In fact, I expected you some while before you arrived, and sent my man, Paul, with a message."

"A message?"

"Certainly—touching a letter from *la belle Flora*. You received it? The message, I mean."

"Then it was not——"

"No, decidedly it was not Mr. Romaine, to whom"—with another glance at the letter—"I perceive you are writing for explanations. And since you are preparing to ask how on earth I traced you to this rather unsavoury den, permit me to inform you that a—b spells 'ab,' and that Bow Street, when on the track of a cri-

minal, does not neglect to open his correspondence."

I felt my hand tremble as it gripped the top rail of my chair, but I managed to command the voice to answer, coldly enough:—

"One moment, Monsieur le Vicomte, before I do myself the pleasure of pitching you out of window. You have detained me these five days in Paris, and have done so, you give me to understand, by the simple expedient of a lie. So far, so good; will you do me the favour to complete the interesting self-exposure, and inform me of your reasons?"

"With all the pleasure in life. My plans were not ready, a little detail wanting, that is all. It is now supplied." He took a chair, seated himself at the table, and drew a folded paper from his breast-pocket. "It will be news to you perhaps, that our uncle—our lamented uncle, if you choose—is dead these three weeks."

"Rest his soul!"

"Forgive me if I stop short of that pious hope." Alain hesitated, let his venom get the better of him, and spat out on his uncle's memory an obscene curse which only betrayed the essential weakness of the man. Recovering himself, he went on; "I need not recall to you a certain scene (I confess too theatrical for my taste) arranged by the lawyer at his bedside; nor need I help you to an inkling of the contents of his last will. But possibly it may have slipped your memory that I gave

Romaine fair warning. I promised him that I would raise the question of undue influence, and that I had my witnesses ready. I have added to them since; but I own to you that my case will be the stronger when you have obligingly signed the paper which I have the honour to submit to you." And he tossed it, unopened, across the table.

I picked it up and unfolded it:—"I, the Viscount Anne de Kéroual de Saint Yves, formerly serving under the name of Champdivers in the Buonapartist army, and later under that name a prisoner of war in the Castle of Edinburgh, hereby state that I had neither knowledge of my uncle the Count de Kéroual de Saint Yves, nor expectations from him, nor was owned by him, until sought out by Mr. Daniel Romaine, in the Castle of Edinburgh, by him supplied with money to expedite my escape, and by him clandestinely smuggled at nightfall into Amersham Place; Further, that until that evening I had never set eyes on my uncle, nor have set eyes on him since; that he was bedridden when I saw him, and apparently in the last stage of senile decay. And I have reason to believe that Mr. Romaine did not fully inform him of the circumstances of my escape, and particularly of my concern in the death of a fellow-prisoner named Goguelat, formerly a *maréchal des logis* in the 22nd Regiment of the Line. . . ."

Of the contents of this precious document let a sample suffice. From end to end it was a tissue of dis-

torted statements implicated with dishonouring suggestions. I read it through, and let it drop on the table.

"I beg your pardon," said I, "but what do you wish me to do with it?"

"Sign it," said he.

I laughed. "Once more I beg your pardon, but though you have apparently dressed for it, this is not comic opera."

"Nevertheless, you will sign."

"Oh, you weary me." I seated myself, and flung a leg over the arm of my chair. "Shall we come to the alternative? For I assume you have one."

"The alternative, to be sure," he answered cheerfully. "I have a companion below, one Clausel, and at the Tête d'or, a little way up the street, an escort of police."

Here was a pleasing predicament. But if Alain had started with a chance of daunting me (which I do not admit), he had spoilt it long since by working on the raw of my temper. I kept a steady eye on him, and considered: and the longer I considered the better assured was I that his game must have a disastrously weak point somewhere, which it was my business to find.

"You have reminded me of your warning to Mr. Romaine. The subject is an ugly one for two of our family to touch upon; but do you happen to recall Mr. Romaine's counter-threat?"

"Bluff! my young sir. It served his purpose for the moment, I grant you. I was unhinged. The indignity, the very monstrosity of it, the baselessness, staggered reason."

"It was baseless then?"

"The best proof is that in spite of his threat, and my open contempt and disregard of it, Mr. Romaine has not stirred a hand."

"You mean that my uncle destroyed the evidence?"

"I mean nothing of the kind," he retorted hotly, "for I deny that any such evidence at any time existed."

I kept my eye on him. "Alain," I said quietly, "you are a liar."

A flush darkened his face beneath its cosmetics, and with an oath he dipped finger and thumb into his waistcoat pocket and pulled out a dog whistle. "No more of that," said he, "or I whistle up the police this minute."

"Well, well, let us resume the discussion. You say this man Clausel has denounced me?"

He nodded.

"Soldiers of the Empire are cheap in Paris just now."

"So cheap that public opinion would be content if all the messieurs Champdivers were to kill all the messieurs Goguelat and be shot or guillotined for it. I forget which your case demands, and doubt if public opinion would inquire."

"And yet," I mused, "there must be preliminaries; some form of trial for instance, with witnesses. It is even possible that I might be found innocent."

"I have allowed for that unlikely chance, and I look beyond it. To be frank, it does not strike me as probable that a British jury will hand over the estates of the Comte de Kéroural de Saint Yves to an escaped Buonapartist prisoner who has stood his trial for the murder of a comrade, and received the benefit of the doubt."

"Allow me," said I, "to open the window an inch or two. No; put back your whistle. I do not propose to fling you out, at least not just yet; nor will I try to escape. To tell you the truth, you suggest the need of a little fresh air. And now, Monsieur, you assure me you hold the knave in your hand. Well then, play him. Before I tear your foolish paper up, let me have a look at your confederate." I stepped to the door and called down the stairs, "Madame Jupille, be so good as to ask my other visitor to ascend."

With that I turned to the window again and stood there looking out upon the foul gutter along which the refuse of some dye-works at the head of the street found its way down to the Seine. And standing so, I heard the expected footsteps mounting the stairs.

"I must ask your pardon, Monsieur, for this intrusion——"

"Hey!" If the words had been a charge of shot

fired into my back, I could not have spun round on them more suddenly. "Mr. Romaine!"

For indeed it was he, and not Clausel, who stood in the doorway. And to this day I do not know if Alain or I stared at him with the blanker bewilderment; though I believe there was a significant difference in our complexions.

"M. le Vicomte," said Romaine advancing, "recently effected an exchange. I had taken the liberty to effect another, and have left Mr. Clausel below listening to some arguments which are being addressed to him by Mr. Dudgeon, my confidential clerk. I think I may promise"—with a chuckle, "they will prove effectual. By your faces, gentlemen, I see that you regard my appearance as something in the nature of a miracle. Yet, M. le Viscount at least should be guessing by this time that it is the simplest, most natural affair in the world. I engaged my word, sir, to have you watched. Will it be set down to more than ordinary astuteness that finding you in negotiations for the exchange of the prisoner Clausel, we kept an eye upon him also?—that we followed him to Dover, and though unfortunate in missing the boat, reached Paris in time to watch the pair of you leave your lodgings this morning—nay, that knowing whither you were bound, we reached the Rue du Fouarre in time to watch you making your dispositions? But I run on too fast. Mr. Anne, I am entrusted with a letter for you. When, with Mr. Alain's

permission you have read it, we will resume our little conversation."

He handed me the letter and walked to the fireplace, where he took snuff copiously, while Alain eyed him like a mastiff about to spring. I broke open my letter and stooped to pick up a small enclosure which fell from it.

"MY DEAREST ANNE,—When your letter came and put life into me again, I sat down in my happiness and wrote you one that I shall never allow you to see; for it makes me wonder at myself. But when I took it to Mr. Robbie, he asked to see your letter, and when I showed him the *wrapper*, declared that it had been tampered with, and if I wrote and told you what we were doing for you, it might only make your enemies the wiser. For we have done something, and this, (which is purely a business letter) is to tell you that the credit does not all belong to Mr. Robbie, or to your Mr. Romaine (who by Mr. Robbie's account must be quite a tiresome old gentleman, though well-meaning no doubt). But on the Tuesday after you left us I had a talk with Major Chevenix, and when I really felt quite sorry for him, (though it was no use and I told him so) he turned round in a way I could not but admire and said he wished me well and would prove it. He said the charge against you was really one for the military authorities alone; that he had reasons for feeling sure that you had been drawn into this affair on a *point of honour*, which was quite a different thing from *what they said*; and that he could not only make an affidavit or something of the kind on his own account, but knew enough of that man Clausel to make him confess the truth. Which he did the very next day, and made Clausel sign it, and Mr. Robbie has a copy of the man's statement which he is sending with this to Mr. Romaine in London; and that is the reason why Rowley (who is a *dear*) has come over, and is waiting in the kitchen while I write these hurried lines. He says too, that Major Chevenix was only just in time, since Clausel's friends are managing an exchange for him, and he is going back to France. And so in haste I write myself,—Your sincere friend,

FLORA,

"P.S.—My aunt is well; Ronald is expecting his commission.

"P.P.S.—You told me to write it, and so I must, 'I love you, Anne.'"

The enclosure was a note in a large and unformed hand, and ran:—

"DEAR MR. ANNE, RESPECTED SIR,—This comes hoping to find you well as it leaves me at present, all is well as Miss Flora will tell you that double-died Clausel has confest. This is to tell you Mrs. Mac R. is going on nicely, bar the religion which is only put on to anoy people and being a widow who blames her, not me. Miss Flora says she will put this in with hers, and there is something else but it is a dead secret, so no more at present from, sir,

"Yours Respectfully,

"JAS. ROWLEY."

Having read these letters through, I placed them in my breast-pocket, stepped to the table and handed Alain's document gravely back to him; then turned to Mr. Romaine, who shut his snuff-box with a snap.

"It only remains, I think," said the lawyer, "to discuss the terms which (merely as a matter of generosity, or say, for the credit of your house) can be granted to your—to Mr. Alain."

"You forget Clausel, I think," snarled my cousin.

"True, I had forgotten Clausel." Mr. Romaine stepped to the head of the stairs and called down, "Dudgeon!"

Mr. Dudgeon appeared, and endeavoured to throw

into the stiffness of his salutation a denial that he had ever waltzed with me in the moonlight.

"Where is the man Clausel?"

"I hardly know, sir, if you would place the wine-shop of the Tête d'Or at the top or the bottom of this street; I presume the top, since the sewer runs in the opposite direction. At all events Mr. Clausel disappeared about two minutes ago in the same direction as the sewer."

Alain sprang up, whistle in hand.

"Put it down," said Mr. Romaine. "The man was cheating you. I can only hope," he added with a sour smile, "that you paid him on account with an I.O.U."

But Alain turned at bay. "One trivial point seems to have escaped you, Master Attorney, or your courage is more than I give you credit for. The English are none too popular in Paris as yet, and this is not the most scrupulous quarter. One blast of this whistle, a cry of *Espion Anglais!* and two Englishmen——"

"Say three," Mr. Romaine interrupted, and strode to the door. "Will Mr. Burchell Fenn be good enough to step upstairs?"

And here let me cry "Halt." There are things in this world, or that is my belief—too pitiful to be set down in writing, and of these, Alain's collapse was one. It may be too, that Mr. Romaine's British righteousness accorded rather ill with the weapon he used so unspar-

ingly. Of Fenn I need only say, that the luscious rogue shouldered through the doorway as though he had a public duty to discharge, and only the contrariness of circumstances had prevented his discharging it before. He cringed to Mr. Romaine, who held him and the whole nexus of his villainies in the hollow of his hand. He was even obsequiously eager to denounce his fellow-traitor. Under a like compulsion, he would (I feel sure) have denounced his own mother. I saw the sturdy Dudgeon's mouth working like a bull terrier's over a shrew mouse. And between them, Alain had never a chance. Not for the first time in this history, I found myself all but taking sides with him in sheer repulsion from the barbarity of the attack. It seemed that it was through Fenn that Mr. Romaine had first happened on the scent; and the greater rogue had held back a part of the evidence, and would trade it now,—“having been led astray—to any gentleman that would let bygones be bygones.” And it was I, at length, who interposed when my cousin was beaten to his knees, and having dismissed Mr. Burchell Fenn, restored the discussion to a businesslike footing. The end of it was that Alain renounced all his claims, and accepted a yearly pension of six thousand francs. Mr. Romaine made it a condition that he should never set foot again in England; but seeing that he would certainly be arrested for debt within twenty-four hours of his landing at Dover, I thought this unnecessary.

"A good day's work," said the lawyer, as we stood together in the street outside.

But I was silent.

"And, now, Mr. Anne, if I may have the honour of your company at dinner—shall we say Tortoni's?—we will on our way step round to my hotel, the Quatre Saisons, behind the Hotel de Ville, and order a *calèche* and four to be in readiness."

CHAPTER XVI.

I GO TO CLAIM FLORA.

BEHOLD me now speeding northwards on the wings of love, ballasted by Mr. Romaine. But, indeed, that worthy man climbed into the *calèche* with something less than his habitual gravity. He was obviously and pardonably flushed with triumph. I observed that now and again he smiled to himself in the twilight, or drew in his breath and emitted it with a martial *pouf!* And when he began to talk—which he did as soon as we were clear of the Saint Denis barrier—the points of the family lawyer were untrussed. He leaned back in the *calèche* with the air of a man who had subscribed to the Peace of Europe, and dined well on top of it. He criticised the fortifications with a wave of his tooth-pick, and discoursed derisively and at large on the Emperor's abdication, on the treachery of the Duke of Ragusa, on the prospects of the Bourbons, and on the character of M. Talleyrand, with anecdotes which made up in raciness for what they lacked in authenticity.

We were bowling through La Chapelle, when he pulled out his snuff-box and proffered it.

"You are silent, Mr. Anne."

"I was waiting for the chorus," said I. "Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the waves: and Britons never, never, never—— Come, out with it!"

"Well," he retorted; "and I hope the tune will come natural to you before long."

"Oh, give me time, my dear sir! I have seen the Cossacks enter Paris, and the Parisians decorate their poodles with the Cross of the Legion of Honour. I have seen them hoist a wretch on the Vendôme column, to smite the bronze face of the man of Austerlitz. I have seen the *salle* of the Opera rise to applaud a blatant fat fellow singing the praises of the Prussian—and to the tune of *Vive Henri Quatre!* I have seen, in my cousin Alain, of what the best blood in France is capable. Also, I have seen peasant boys—unripe crops of the later levies—mown down by grape-shot—raise themselves on their elbows, to cheer for France and the little man in grey. In time, Mr. Romaine, no doubt my memory will confuse these lads with their betters, and their mothers with the ladies of the *salle de l'Opéra*: just as in time, no doubt, I shall find myself Justice of the Peace, and Deputy Lieutenant of the shire of Buckingham. I am changing my country, as you remind me: and, on my faith, she has no place for me. But, for the sake of her, I have explored and found the best of her—in my new country's prisons. And I repeat, you must give me time."

"Tut, tut!" was his comment, as I searched for

tinder box and sulphur match to relight my segar. "We must get you into Parliament, Mr. Anne. You have the gift."

As we approached Saint Denis, the flow of his discourse sensibly slackened: and, a little beyond, he pulled his travelling cap over his ears, and settled down to slumber. I sat wide awake beside him. The spring night had a touch of chill in it, and the breath of our horses, streaming back upon the lamps of the *calèche*, kept a constant nimbus between me and the postillions. Above it, and over the black spires of the poplar avenues, the regiments of stars moved in parade. My gaze went up to the ensign of their noiseless evolutions, to the pole-star, and to Cassiopeia swinging beneath it, low in the north, over my Flora's pillow—*my* pole-star and journey's end.

Under this soothing reflection I composed myself to slumber; and awoke, to my surprise and annoyance, in a miserable flutter of the nerves. And this fretfulness increased with the hours, so that from Amiens to the coast, Mr. Romaine must have had the devil of a time with me. I bolted my meals at the way-houses, chafing all the while at the business of the relays. I popped up and down in the *calèche* like a shot on a hot shovel. I cursed our pace. I girded at the lawyer's snuff-box, and could have called him out upon Calais sands, when we reached them, to justify his vile methodical use of it. By good fortune we arrived to find the packet ready with her warps, and bundled ourselves on board in a

hurry. We sought separate cabins for the night, and in mine, as in a sort of moral bath, the drastic cross seas of the Channel cleansed me of my irritable humour, and left me like a rag, beaten and hung on a clothes-line to the winds of heaven.

In the grey of the morning we disembarked at Dover; and here Mr. Romaine had prepared a surprise for me. For, as we drew to the shore, and the throng of porters and waterside loafers, on what should my gaze alight but the beaming countenance of Mr. Rowley! I declare it communicated a roseate flush to the pallid cliffs of Albion. I could have fallen on his neck. On his side the honest lad kept touching his hat and grinning in a speechless ecstasy. As he confessed to me later, "It was either hold my tongue, sir, or call for three cheers." He snatched my valise and ushered us through the crowd, to our hotel-breakfast. And, it seemed he must have filled up his time at Dover with trumpeting of our importance: for the landlord welcomed us on the *perron*, obsequiously cringing; we entered in a respectful hush that might have flattered his Grace of Wellington himself; and the waiters, I believe, would have gone on all fours, but for the difficulty of reconciling that posture with efficient service. I knew myself at last for a Personage: a great English land-owner: and did my best to command the mien proper to that tremendous class when, the meal despatched, we passed out between the bowing ranks to the door where our chaise stood ready.

"But hullo!" said I at sight of it; and my eye sought Rowley's.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but I took it on myself to order the colour, and hoping it wasn't a liberty."

"Claret and invisible green—a duplicate, but for a bullet-hole wanting."

"Which I didn't like to go so far on my own hook, Mr. Anne."

"We fight under the old colours, my lad."

"And walk in and win this time, sir, strike me lucky!"

While we bowled along the first stage towards London—Mr. Romaine and I within the chaise and Rowley perched upon the dickey—I told the lawyer of our progress from Aylesbury to Kirkby-Lonsdale. He took snuff.

"*Forsitan et hæc olim*—that Rowley of yours seems a good-hearted lad, and less of a fool than he looks. The next time I have to travel post with an impatient lover, I'll take a leaf out of his book and buy me a flageolet."

"Sir, it was ungrateful of me——"

"Tut, tut, Mr. Anne. I was fresh from my little triumph, that is all; and perhaps would have felt the better for a word of approbation—a little pat on the back, as I may say. It is not often that I have felt the need of it—twice or thrice in my life, perhaps: not often enough to justify my anticipating your example and

seeking a wife betimes: for that is a man's one chance if he wants another to taste his success."

"And yet I dare swear you rejoice in mine unselfishly enough."

"Why, no, sir: your cousin would have sent me to the right-about within a week of his succession. Still, I own to you that he offended something at least as deep as self-interest: the sight and scent of him habitually turned my gorge: whereas,"—and he inclined to me with a dry smile—"your unwisdom at least was amiable, and—in short, sir, though you can be infernally provoking, it has been a pleasure to serve you."

You may be sure that this did not lessen my contrition. We reached London late that night; and here Mr. Romaine took leave of us. Business waited for him at Amersham Place. After a few hours' sleep, Rowley woke me to choose between two post-boys in blue jackets and white hats, and two in buff jackets and black hats, who were competing for the honour of conveying us as far as Barnet: and having decided in favour of the blue and white, and solaced the buff and black with a *pourboire*, we pushed forward once more.

We were now upon the Great North Road, along which the York mail rolled its steady ten miles an hour to the wafted music of the guard's bugle; a rate of speed which, to the more Dorian mood of Mr. Rowley's flageolet, I proposed to better by one-fifth. But first,

having restored the lad to his old seat beside me, I must cross-question him upon his adventures in Edinburgh, and the latest news of Flora and her aunt, Mr. Robbie, Mrs. McRankine, and the rest of my friends. It came out that Mr. Rowley's surrender to my dear girl had been both instantaneous and complete. "She *is* a floorer, Mr. Anne. I suppose now, sir, you'll be standing up for that knock-me-down kind of thing?"

"Explain yourself, my lad."

"Beg your pardon, sir, what they call love at first sight." He wore an ingenuous blush and an expression at once shy and insinuating.

"The poets, Rowley, are on my side."

"Mrs. McRankine, sir——"

"The Queen of Navarre, Mr. Rowley——"

But he so far forgot himself as to interrupt. "It took Mrs. McRankine years, sir, to get used to her first husband. She told me so."

"It took us some days, if I remember, to get used to Mrs. McRankine. To be sure, her cooking——"

"That's what I say, Mr. Anne: it's more than skin-deep: and you'll hardly believe me, sir—that is, if you didn't take note of it—but she hev got an ankle."

He had produced the pieces of his flageolet, and was adjusting them nervously, with a face red as a turkey-cock's wattles. I regarded him with a new and incredulous amusement. That I served Mr. Rowley for a glass of fashion and a mould of form was of course no new discovery: and the traditions of body-service

allow, nay enjoin, that when the gentleman goes a-woo-ing, the valet shall take a sympathetic wound. What could be more natural than that a gentleman of sixteen should select a lady of fifty for his first essay in the tender passion. Still—Bethiah McRankine!

I kept my countenance with an effort. "Mr. Rowley," said I, "if music be the food of love, play on." And Mr. Rowley gave "The Girl I left Behind me," shyly at first, but anon with terrific expression. He broke off with a sigh: "Heigho!" in fact, said Rowley: and started off again while I tapped out the time, and hummed:

"But now I'm bound for Brighton camp,
Kind heaven then pray guide me,
And send me safely back again
To the girl I left behind me!"

Thenceforward that not uninspiring air became the *motif* of our progress. We never tired of it. Whenever our conversation flagged, by tacit consent Mr. Rowley pieced his flageolet together and started it. The horses lilted it out in their gallop: the harness jingled, the postillions tittupped to it. And the *presto* with which it wound up as we came to a post-house and a fresh relay of horses had to be heard to be believed.

So with the chaise windows open to the vigorous airs of spring, and my own breast like a window flung wide to youth and health and happy expectations, I rattled homewards; impatient as a lover should be, yet not too impatient to taste the humour of spinning like a lord, with a pocketful of money, along the road which

the *ci-devant* M. Champdivers had so fearfully dodged and skirted in Burchell Fenn's covered cart.

And yet so impatient that when we galloped over the Calton Hill and down into Edinburgh by the new London road, with the wind in our faces, and a sense of April in it, brisk and jolly, I must pack off Rowley to our lodgings with the valises, and stay only for a wash and breakfast at Dumbreck's before posting on to Swanston alone.

“Whene’er my steps return that way,
Still faithful shall she find me,
And never more again I’ll stray
From the Girl I left behind me.”

Where the gables of the cottage rose into view over the hill's shoulder I dismissed my driver and walked forward, whistling the tune; but fell silent as I came under the lee of the garden wall, and sought for the exact spot of my old escalade. I found it by the wide beechen branches over the road, and hoisted myself noiselessly up to the coping where, as before, they screened me—or would have screened me had I cared to wait.

But I did not care to wait; and why? Because, not fifteen yards from me, she stood!—she, my Flora, my goddess, bareheaded, swept by chequers of morning sunshine and green shadows, with the dew on her sandal shoes and the lap of her morning gown appropriately heaped with flowers—with tulips, scarlet, yellow, and striped. And confronting her, with his back towards me

and a remembered patch between the armholes of his stable-waistcoat, Robie the gardener rested both hands on his spade and expostulated.

"But I like to pick my tulips leaves and all, Robie!"

"Aweel, miss; it's clean ruinin' the bulbs, that's all I say to you."

And that was all I waited to hear. As he bent over and resumed his digging I shook a branch of the beech with both hands and set it swaying. She heard the rustle and glanced up, and, spying me, uttered a gasping little cry.

"What ails ye, miss?" Robie straightened himself instantler; but she had whipped right-about face and was gazing towards the kitchen garden:

"Isn't that a child among the arti—the strawberry beds, I mean?"

He cast down his spade and ran. She turned, let the tulips fall at her feet, and, ah! her second cry of gladness, and her heavenly blush as she stretched out both arms to me! It was all happening over again—with the difference that now my arms too were stretched out.

"Journeys end in lovers meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know. . . ."

Robie had run a dozen yards perhaps, when either the noise I made in scrambling off the wall, or some recollection of having been served in this way before, brought him to a halt. At anyrate he turned round, and just in time to witness our embrace.

"The good Lord behear!" he exclaimed, stood stock-still for a moment, and waddled off at top speed towards the back-door.

"We must tell Aunt at once! She will—why, Anne, where are you going?" She caught my sleeve.

"To the hen-house to be sure," said I.

A moment later, with peals of happy laughter we had taken hands and were running along the garden alleys towards the house. And I remember, as we ran, finding it somewhat singular that this should be the first time I had ever invaded Swanston Cottage by way of the front door.

We came upon Miss Gilchrist in the breakfast room. A pile of linen lay on the horse-hair sofa; and the good lady, with a measuring tape in one hand and a pair of scissors in the other, was walking around Ronald, who stood on the hearthrug in a very manly attitude. She regarded me over her gold-rimmed spectacles, and, shifting the scissors into her left hand, held out her right.

"H'm," said she; "I give ye good morning, Mosha. And what might you be wanting of us this time?"

"Madam," I answered, "that, I hope, is fairly evident."

Ronald came forward. "I congratulate you, Saint-Ives, with all my heart. And you may congratulate me: I have my commission."

"Nay, then," said I, "let me rather congratulate

France that the war is over. Seriously, my dear fellow, I wish you joy. What's the regiment?"

"The 4-th."

"Chevenix's!"

"Chevenix is a decent fellow. He has behaved very well, indeed he has."

"Very well indeed," said Flora, nodding her head.

"He has the knack. But if you expect me to like him any the better for it——"

"Major Chevenix," put in Miss Gilchrist in her most Rhadamanthine voice, "always sets me in mind of a pair of scissors." She opened and shut the pair in her hand, and I had to confess that the stiff and sawing action was admirably illustrative. "But I wish to heaven, madame," thought I, "you could have chosen another simile!"

In the evening of that beatific day I walked back to Edinburgh by some aerial and rose-clouded path not indicated on the maps. It led somehow to my lodgings and my feet touched earth when the door was opened to me by Bethiah McRankine.

"But where is Rowley?" I asked a moment later, looking round my sitting-room.

Mrs. McRankine smiled sardonically. "Him? He came back rolling his eyes so that I guessed him to be troubled in the wind. And he's in bed this hour past with a spoonful of peppermint in his little wame."

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And here I may ring down the curtain upon the adventures of Anne de Saint-Yves.

Flora and I were married early in June, and had been settled for a little over six months, amid the splendours of Amersham Place, when news came of the Emperor's escape from Elba. Throughout the consequent alarms and excursions of the Hundred Days (as M. de Chambord named them for us) I have to confess that the Vicomte Anne sat still and warmed his hands at the domestic hearth. To be sure, Napoleon had been my master, and I had no love for the *cocarde blanche*. But here was I, an Englishman, already, in legal but inaccurate phrase, a "naturalised" one, having, as Mr. Romaine put it, a stake in the country, not to speak of a nascent interest in its game-laws and the local administration of justice. In short, here was a situation to tickle a casuist. It did not, I may say, tickle me in the least, but played the mischief with my peace. If you, my friends, having weighed the *pro* and *contra*, would have counselled inaction, possibly, allowing for the *hébétude de foyer* and the fact that Flora was soon to become a mother, you might have predicted it. At anyrate I sat still and read the newspapers; and on the top of them came a letter from Ronald, announcing that the 4-th had their marching, or rather their sailing, orders, and that within a week his boat would rock by the pier of Leith to convey him and his comrades to join the Duke of Wellington's forces in the Low Coun-

tries. Forthwith nothing would suit my dear girl but we must post to Edinburgh to bid him farewell—in a chariot, this time, with a box seat for her maid and Mr. Rowley. We reached Swanston in time for Ronald to spend the eve of his departure with us at the Cottage, and very gallant the boy looked in his scarlet uniform, which he wore for the ladies' benefit, and which (God forgive us men!) they properly bedewed with their tears.

Early next morning we drove over to the city and drew up in the thick of the crowd gathered at the foot of the Castle Hill to see the 4-th march out. We had waited half an hour, perhaps, when we heard two thumps of a drum and the first notes of the regimental quick-step sounded within the walls; the sentry at the outer gate stepped back and presented arms, and the ponderous archway grew bright with the red coats and brazen instruments of the band. The farewells on their side had been said; and the inexorable *tramp—tramp* upon the drawbridge was the burthen of their answer to the waving handkerchiefs, the huzzas of the citizens, the cries of the women. On they came, and in the first rank, behind the band, rose Major Chevenix. He saw us, flushed a little and gravely saluted. I never liked the man; but will admit he made a fine figure there. And I pitied him a little; for while his eyes rested on Flora, hers wandered to the rear of the third company, where Ensign Ronald Gilchrist

marched beside the tattered colours with chin held up and a high colour on his young cheeks and a lip that quivered as he passed us.

"God bless you, Ronald!"

"Left wheel!" The band and the Major riding behind it swung round the corner into North Bridge Street; the rear-rank and the adjutant behind it passed up the Lawnmarket. Our driver was touching up his horses to follow, when Flora's hand stole into mine. And I turned from my own conflicting thoughts to comfort her.

THE END.

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